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DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

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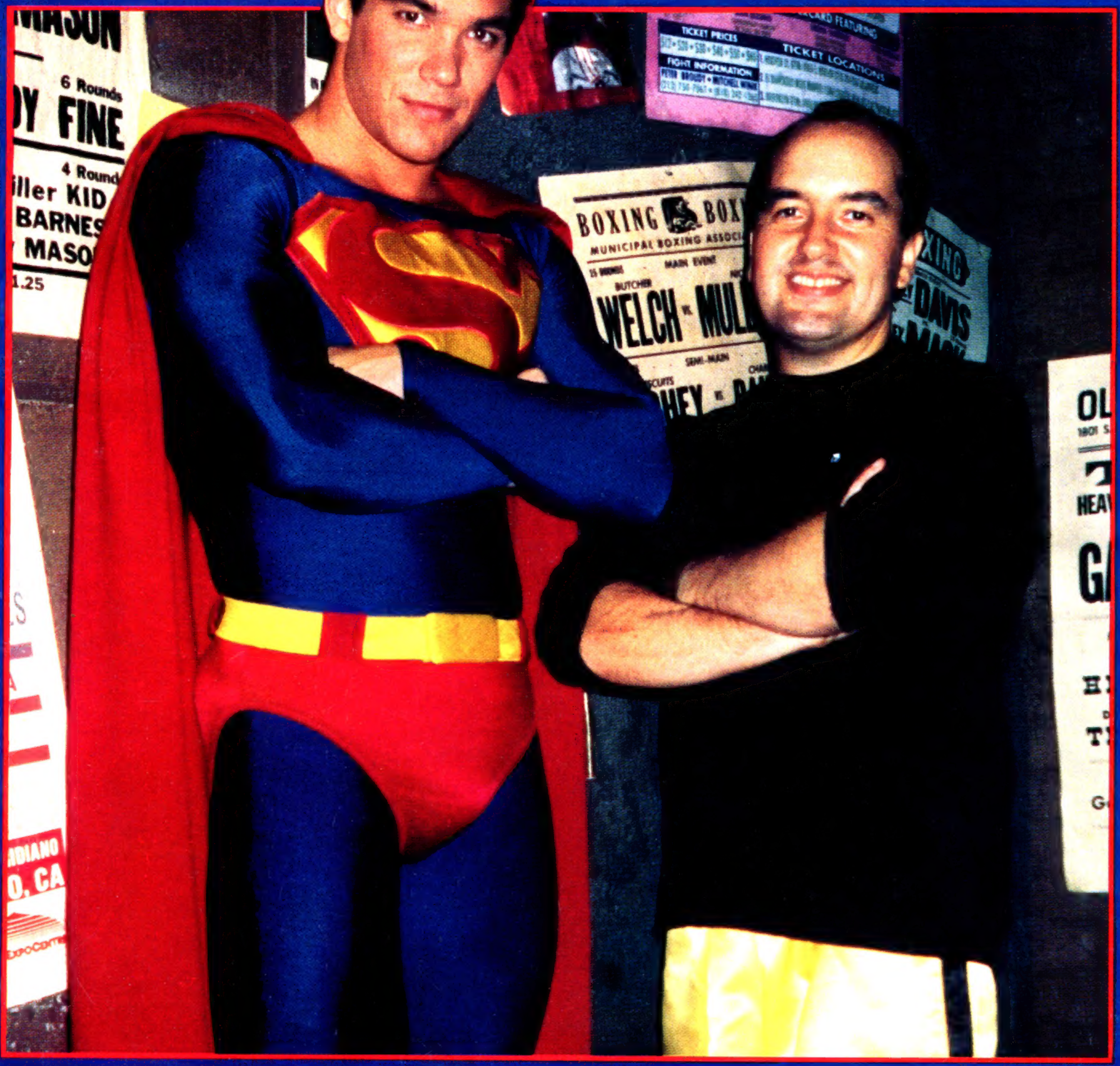

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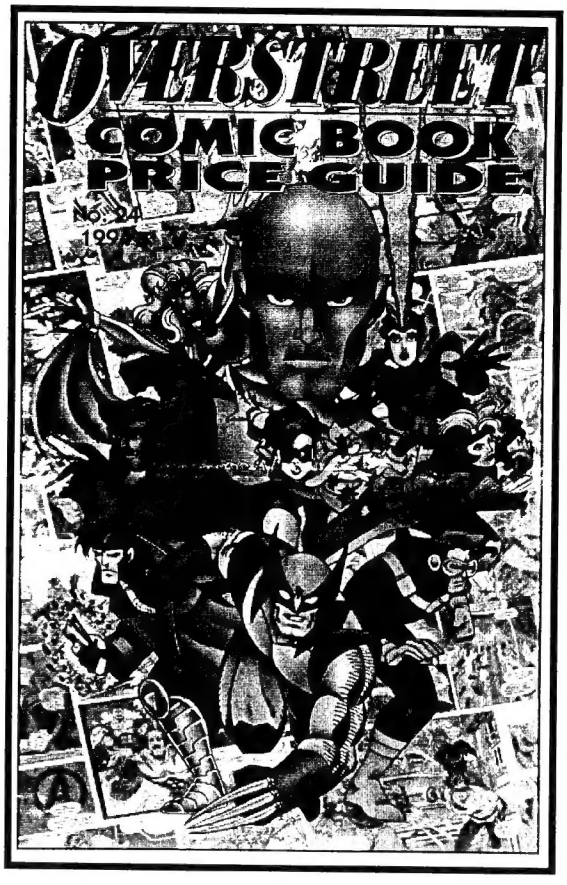

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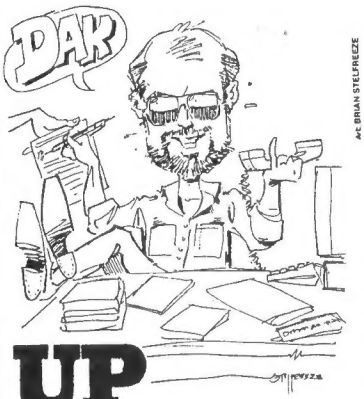
cover:
on the set of **lois & clark**
PAUL POWER & SUPERMAN
from the 5th episode, "requiem for a superman" — paul played a bionic boxer



art: BRIAN STELFREEZE

UP FRONT

I love LOIS & CLARK.

The TV show, that is. It's certainly no FLASH (in the pan) — which is indeed fortunate. And while I don't usually offer my opinions here in this space, preferring to adhere to the founding philosophy of COMICS INTERVIEW which provides that the magazine is an organ for the opinions of others, I'm happy to be able to offer a counterpoint to my earlier editorial (in issue #88) taking TV to task for the mediocre treatment of superheroes.

The characters of Lois Lane and Clark Kent, in comics and on the screen, have never really grabbed me, with the possible exception of the first **Christopher Reeve** & **Margot Kidder** SUPERMAN movie. And specifically, to quote from my earlier editorial, "What is it that makes TV actors so utterly unable to bring conviction to their roles? Why must TV series be mediocre?"

So imagine my surprise at actually liking tha antics, the interaction, the *characters* of Lois and Clark — thanks almost entirely to the superb acting efforts of **Teri Hatcher** and **Dean Cain.** The casting of this pair, and the overall series concept, the "take" on Superman, makes this show.

Like THE INCREDIBLE HULK TV series of several years ago, the emphasis is on character and story — not battle for the sake of battle, which has become the bane of so many superhero comics. In concept, LOIS & CLARK is closer to the early Marvel Comics approach to, say, Spider-Man than to today's rock 'em sock 'em super slugfests — and that's why I like it.

Superman? Sure, I like Superman, have since I was a kid. But Lois and Clark? They were window dressing — I never really cared one way or the other about them. They were no fun.

Until now.

~Dave

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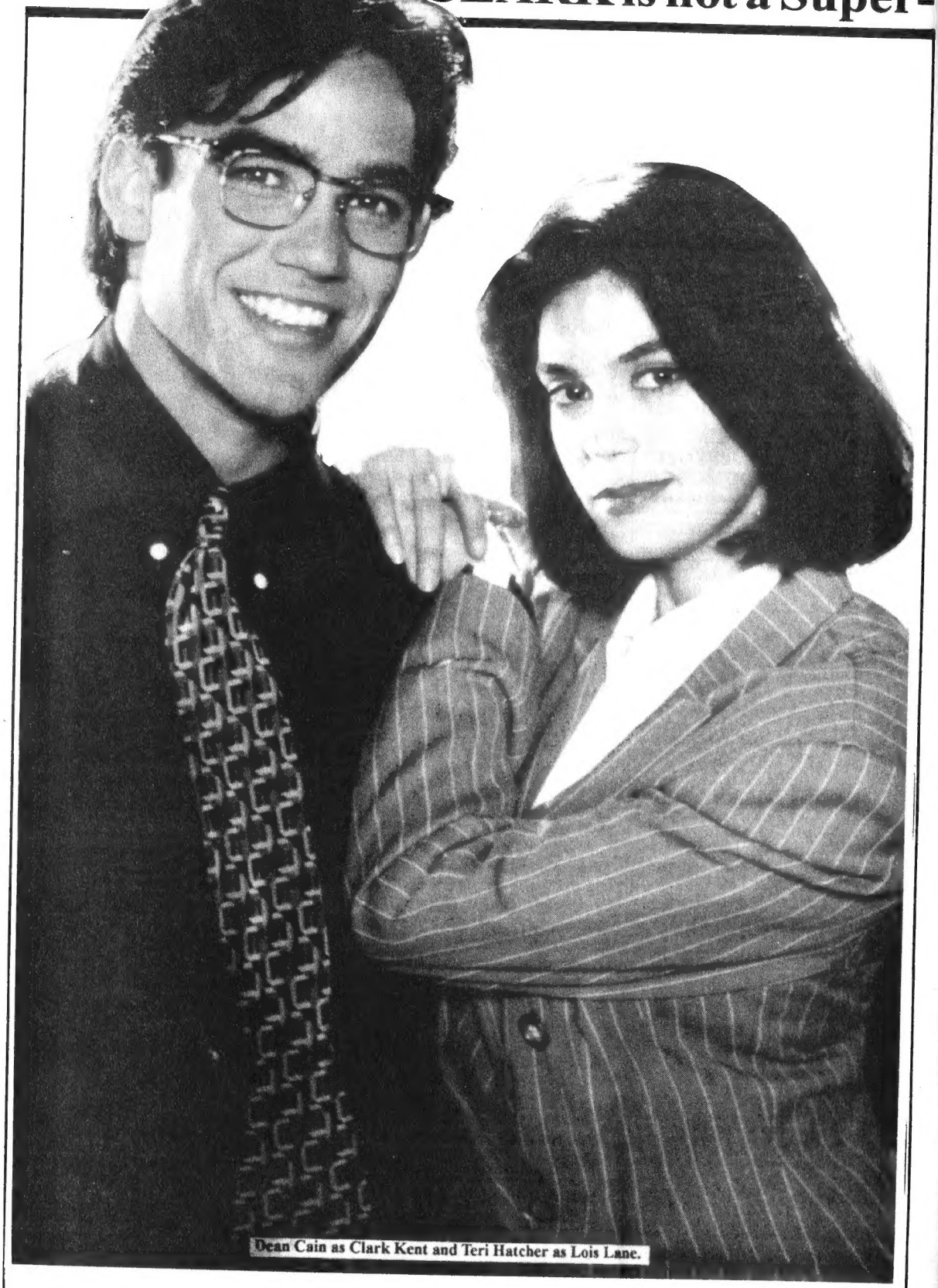


Dean Cain as Clark Kent and Teri Hatcher as Lois Lane.

man series. It's a Lois and Clark series."

LOIS & CLARK

THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN

As a child of the '50s, the first TV show I remember with nostalgic fondness is, predictably, the original black and white SUPERMAN. I loved that show, and none of the corny scripts or acting, let alone the ho-hum special effects, got in the way of my childhood sense of wonder. When George Reeves took off his glasses and jumped out that window, by George (so to speak) he was Superman in my young eyes!

In fact, in much the same way that most people remember where they were when they heard of John Kennedy's assassination, I recall clearly where I was when I heard of George Reeves' death. I was a fourth grader and somehow word got to me while I was in a classroom that he had killed himself. Beyond the awful finality of his death was the very frightening idea that he had committed suicide. I'm quite certain that this was the first time in my young life I had even heard the word. The fact that my hero had done himself in just about short-circuited my developing brain circuits. It simply didn't add up. Ironically, today there is ample proof that Reeves did not commit suicide, which certainly makes me feel some relief (even if his supposed killers have not been brought to justice).

I have followed faithfully every media incarnation of Superman since that treasured TV series (which I still enjoy watching on its Nickelodeon reruns). The films are of uneven quality, to say the least; but, of the four, certainly at least the first has its moments of grandeur, and even the fourth contains what is probably the most "comic book-ish" battle sequence yet filmed. Like I say, they're a mixed bag. But, there are worse ways to spend a day than catching up on these if you haven't watched them for a while.

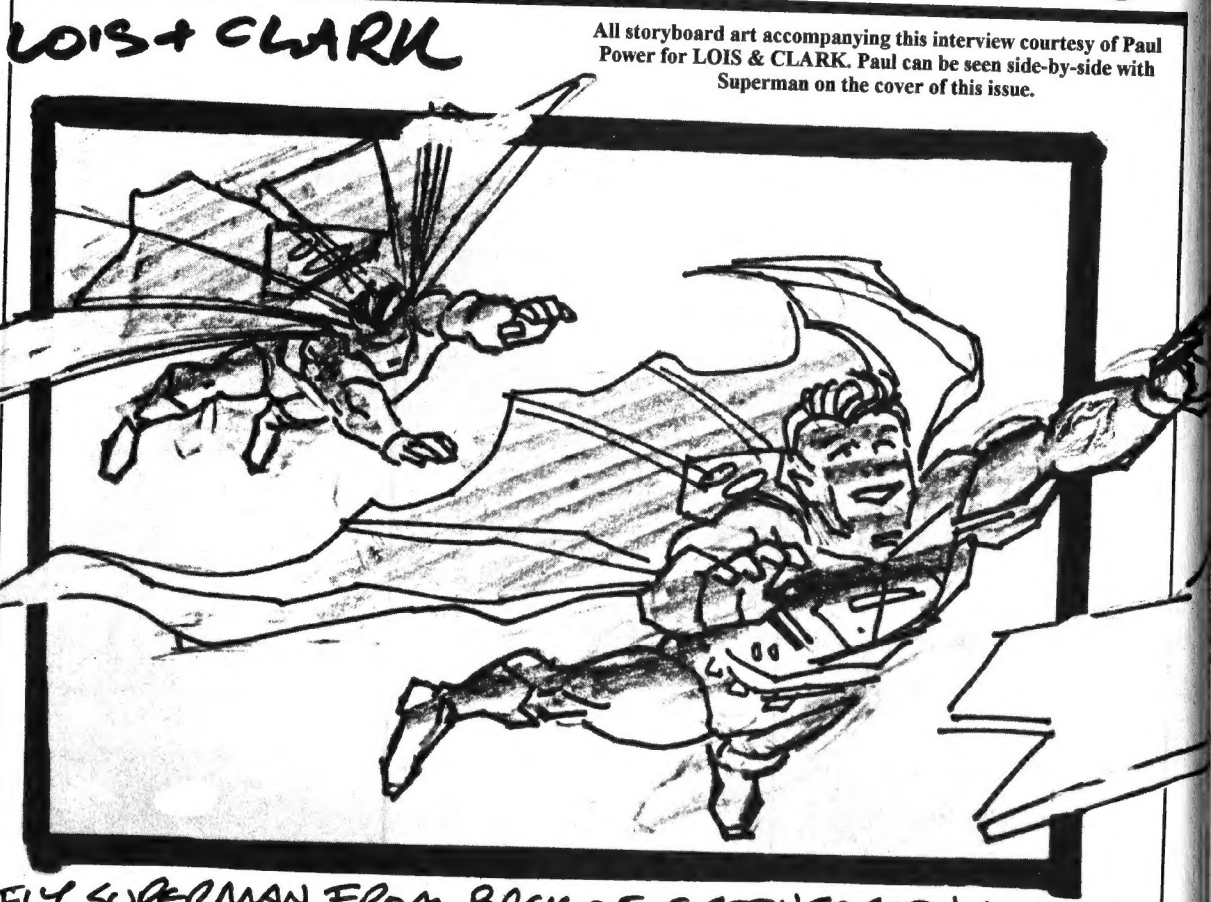
The SUPERBOY TV show intrigued me for two reasons: very good flying effects, and Stacy Haiduk. The former were a particular thrill because, of all of Superman's powers, the one that always impressed me the most was his ability to fly. The SUPERBOY flying effects were so seamless that they really did give me at least some idea of what that sensation might be like. And, Stacy Haiduk . . . well, it was my first crush on a TV star since the heyday of Lindsay Wagner as the Bionic Woman. 'Nuff said!

I approached LOIS & CLARK with a combination of excitement and trepidation. I was hopeful that good writing could create the first adult-oriented Superman show, yet I also wanted the show to satisfy my urge to see the Kryptonian in super-powered action every week. Could the show somehow deliver both?

The answer has been: sometimes.

Superman, Lois Lane, their likenesses, logos & associated characters TM & ©1994 DC Comics Inc. Photo courtesy Jerry Fitzgerald, logo courtesy Warner Bros. Television.

"We hope by the time Lois and Clark get



All storyboard art accompanying this interview courtesy of Paul Power for LOIS & CLARK. Paul can be seen side-by-side with Superman on the cover of this issue.

Overall, I feel LOIS & CLARK does a better job with the aforementioned pair than with Clark's secret identity. But, there have been a fair number of moments when I've been able to get that rush, much akin to the way I felt when I first saw George Reeves and his rubber muscles bouncing across the screen. It's for that sense of wonder that I return to LOIS & CLARK weekly, and happily. Sometimes it delivers the goods — no mean feat. One of the main reasons that LOIS & CLARK works for comics fans at all is because of the efforts of the two people I've interviewed here. Paul Power has a lifelong interest in comics, and as the storyboard artist of the show's flying sequences, Paul has reached for a very lofty goal: attempting to show on-screen Superman flying the way he does in the comics. And, by golly, often he succeeds, much to my delight.

Bryce Zabel, a supervising producer and screenwriter for the show, also brings to the party an abiding interest in comics. Not surprisingly, his episodes are some of the ones that feel most like a comic-book storyline. And certainly they are written with great affection for the characters and their comic-book history.

I'm convinced that having these two men, with their passion for comics, on this show has helped it in a multitude of ways to become at least something akin to a comic-book fan's greatest wish: that LOIS & CLARK is true to the magical vision of its comic-book genius inventors, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster. And that's no faint praise!

Settle back now and enjoy a round table discussion which Bryce later likened to "the PLAYBOY interview" style, as the three of us discussed the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of bringing LOIS & CLARK to your TV set each week . . .

JEFF GELB: *Paul Power, how'd you get involved in the LOIS & CLARK TV show?*

PAUL POWER: I worked with **John Scheele** on a film. He was a special effects supervisor on a Disney film I worked on, called MY SCIENCE PROJECT. We hadn't worked together for ten years. I saw him walking across the lot when I was working on the BOB TV show. I ran into John and hardly recognized him. He showed me this big shot they were doing for CONEHEADS. He said he had something planned which would be up my alley. I wasn't sure BOB (which I was working on) was going to last. At least BOB tried to get as close as Hollywood can get to comics. He called me to work on LOIS & CLARK. Together we directed the flying sequences for a bulk of green screen stuff we did. We logged a bunch of stuff . It went well.

JEFF: *Let's get some background on you, Bryce.*

BRYCE ZABEL: I started my career as a TV news reporter. I was an anchorman for a while, I was the first CNN correspondent here in Los Angeles. After leaving CNN, I tried to decide what I could possibly do for a living that would allow me to stay in Los Angeles. I came

married on TV, the comics will be ready."

up with the notion of writing. The first two scripts I wrote actually became TV series. One of them is called ENG (Electronic News Gathering). It's finishing its fifth season in Canada. The other is KAY O'BRIEN, which was on CBS in 1986. I've worked on staff since then. I came to LOIS & CLARK because in 1990 I was on the staff of EQUAL JUSTICE. That's where I met **Deborah Joy Levine,** who ended up writing the SUPERMAN pilot. I came aboard here over a year ago now — it seems like forever — after the pilot script was written but before it was filmed. With the exception of Deborah, I think I'm the senior standing member of the crew.

JEFF: *What's your current title?*

BRYCE: Supervising producer.

JEFF: *You also write some of the screenplays?*

BRYCE: I've written three of them this season and re-written others.

JEFF: *What's the good news?*

BRYCE: The good news is that I'm the co-executive producer on the Fox series MANTIS, which is a black superhero. The thumbnail sketch would be a black Batman. His powers arise from his technology and his crime-fighting. It has a 13-episode order starting in August. I think it'll air after NFL football. The original two-hour pilot got good numbers among men 18-49. They think the football crowd might hang in there for that.

JEFF: *Bryce, you come to LOIS & CLARK and MANTIS as a fan of comics.*

BRYCE: Absolutely. I remember buying my first SUPERMAN comic when I was five years old. To this day, an early Superman comic is always combined in my senses with the smell of a pharmacy. Back then, you didn't go to comics stores, you bought them wherever they were. I'd literally buy my comics at the local pharmacy where you'd smell the medicine. They also had a fountain there. You'd get your Green River or your Cherry Coke at the same time.

JEFF: *It's funny. My memory is barber shops. When I smell old comics, I can always smell the crap they used to put in your hair. To this day, I can still smell it in a lot of old '50s comics. Maybe it's just the pulp. Do you still read comics?*

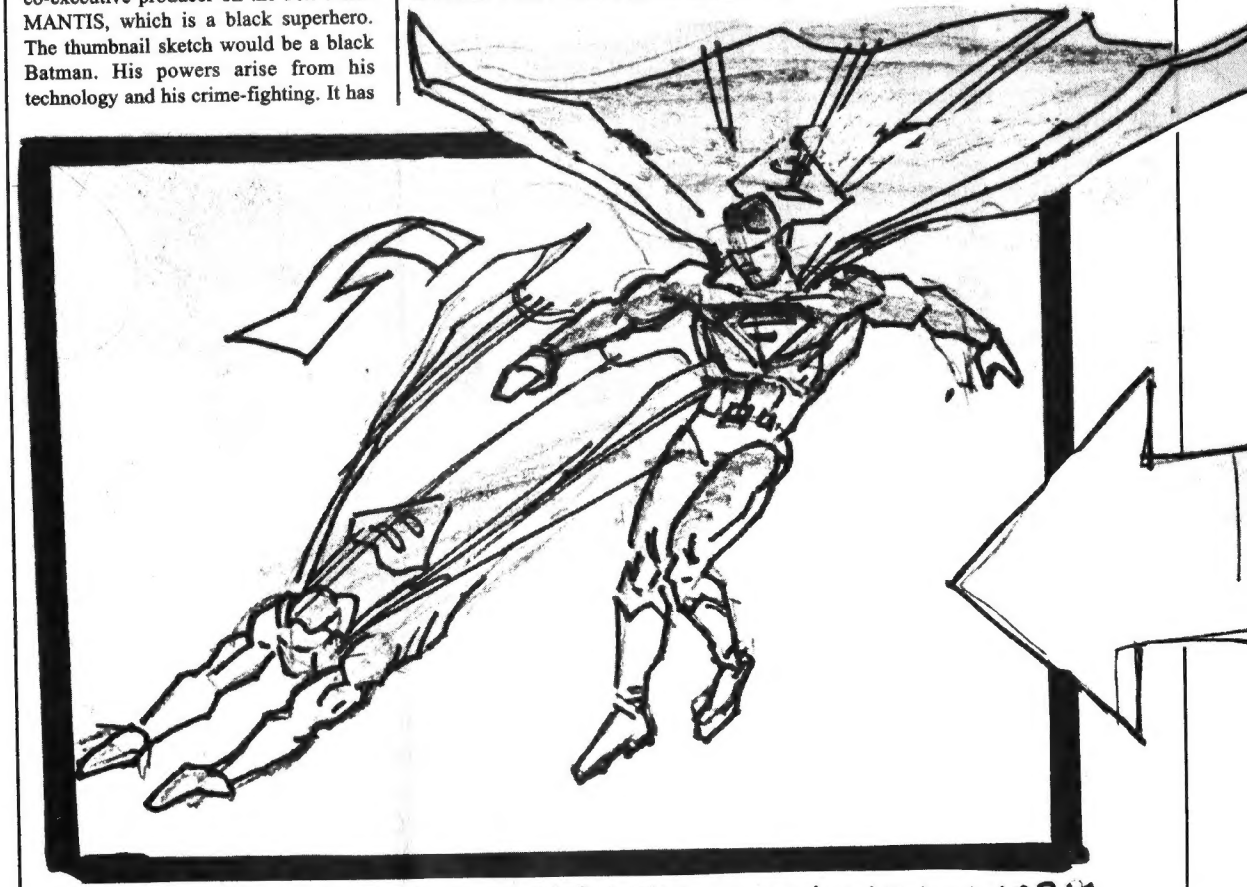
BRYCE: I do. I read a lot of different comics. I think they're better than ever.

JEFF: *Did you just never give up collecting books?*

BRYCE: I was very heavily into Marvel as a kid. Becoming an adult, I checked out of the SUPERMAN comic buying habit in 1962 when I started reading FANTASTIC FOUR. By the time 1963 hit, it was a done deal. There was no more DC. It was like Marvel was the place. Over time, I think I went through a curve that everybody goes through: comics are for kids. I'd better get rid of all these things. I ended up getting rid of a collection for $300 that's probably worth $40,000 today.

PAUL: It's better than having it stolen from you.

BRYCE: Then, as time went on, I'd check into the local stores and just buy a handful of comics to see what was happening with my favorite guys and see what else was being done. And most recently, in the last 2-3 years, I started getting back into it with SUPERMAN. It



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"If they have children, what kind are they?"

was an interesting coincidence of events. Obviously, taking a job at LOIS & CLARK at around the same time that the Death of Superman was happening . . .

JEFF: *You were reading it at that time?*

PAUL: It was a peak on a peak. The comic was peaking and the series was happening. For me, when I met Bryce, it was, "Oh, a writer is really into it. This is great." We were like jabbering monkeys.

JEFF: *Did it matter to them that you had an interest in comics?*

BRYCE: Nobody cared. Actually, as legend has it around here, we're the ones who are responsible for killing Superman. The way it's been explained to me is that DC was planning to marry Clark and Lois. That was the plan until LOIS & CLARK the TV series began to achieve interest in town. They realized that they'd begin creating real cognitive dissonance. They'd have Lois and Clark married in the comics but starting their relationship over on TV. What they thought they could do would be to kill him. If you'll notice, Superman came back right around the time LOIS & CLARK came on the air. They got us back in synch to a certain extent. I don't know if we'll necessarily achieve this, but we hoped that around the time Lois and Clark want to get married on TV, the comics will be ready to marry them off. You'll achieve one of those moments when they all come together.

JEFF: *Synchronicity. It seems comics are on hold on this whole topic until the TV show gives it the high sign. Does the fact that you're going to MANTIS have anything to do with the fact of LOIS & CLARK not having been picked up yet?*

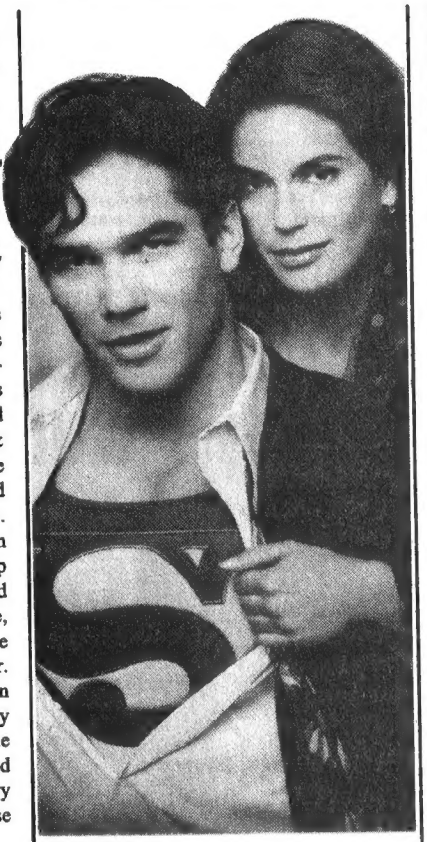
BRYCE: It hasn't been picked up yet, although I think it's quite likely it'll be picked up. I can't imagine it not being picked up. It's clearly the winner in our battle with SEAQUEST. I don't think anybody expected us to beat MURDER SHE WROTE. God knows why people watch that show but they do. In terms of our audience, we've managed to do well and build over the season. What I call street Nielsens, where you talk to people on the street and see what they have to say, have been going up and up all season long. I run into people all the time who say, "That's my favorite show; I watch it all the time," or "My kids made me watch it and I really liked it." I think we're starting to achieve that breakthrough.

JEFF: *Your suspicion would be that it'll be back this fall?*

BRYCE: I'd bet on it.

JEFF: *When will they let you know?*

BRYCE: I think they'll probably exercise caution and let us know by May. May's when all pilots get ordered to



series. At that point, you usually start production in July and are on the air in September/October.

JEFF: *You've just finished filming your last episode as we speak.*

PAUL: St. Patrick's Day.

JEFF: *Is it a cliffhanger?*

BRYCE: At one point, it was going to be a cliffhanger. There was some thought that it was a great way to bring people back, but if you don't come back it's a bummer to do that to people. What we did was use our 19th episode as something of a cliffhanger, and in our 20th episode we attempted to resolve some of the things. There are some threads that leave you wondering. For example, at the end of the last episode, you might believe that Lex Luthor is dead. Depending on what the network and studio think about the actor and part, he might be dead. Or he might be coming back. That's unclear. In terms of the overall series, whether Lois and Clark are widely apart or sort of together, we resolve that. People will already know by the time they read this. Lois will not marry Lex Luthor but Lois and Clark will not quite achieve synchronicity.

PAUL: No bopping this season.

JEFF: *There's that often quoted Deborah line that says, if the ratings go down, we'll get them together real quick. Obviously, you haven't had to do that. At this rate, it may never happen.*

BRYCE: I kind of disagree with her on that. I'm not sure that would bring anybody to it anyway. I think they enjoy the banter. The minute you bring them together . . . all shows have that as a problem. I don't think that's really a problem for LOIS & CLARK, but I think there are only so many places you can go for stories in that relationship. It's a natural progression. It makes sense to me to postpone that day as long as possible. If I was staying with the show, I certainly wouldn't have any trepidation about bringing them together, but I wouldn't be in any hurry to do it either.

PAUL: It's like the old comic strips. They always kept the hero and heroine apart. They always kept that tension. In a movie about comic strips, HOW TO MURDER YOUR WIFE, with **Jack Lemmon,** they showed that he was this James Bond-type detective. The minute he got married, life changed (in the comic strip). I think you need the tension of the characters.

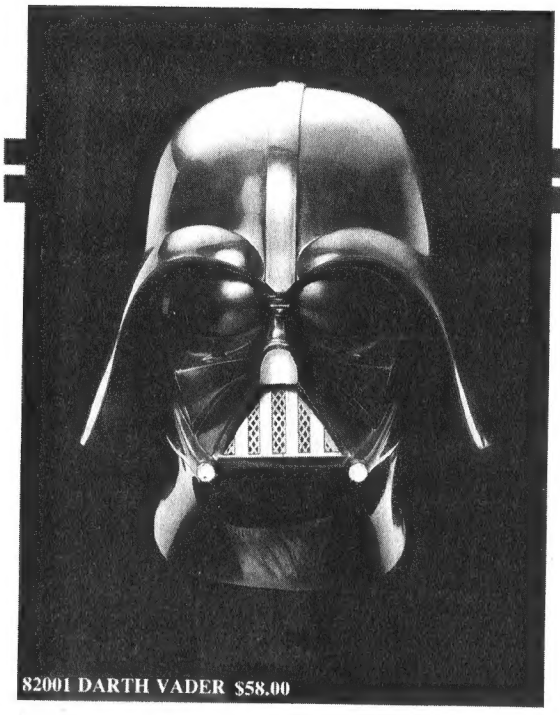
BRYCE: To tell you, I would be fascinated to see where this show will be if we indeed stay on the air for five years. Clearly, LOIS & CLARK is not a Superman series, it's a Lois and Clark series. Clark happens to be Superman so there's that large element of it. But, essentially, the relationship is the driving force here. As with any story about a relationship, there are certain marks you're going to hit. There are certain places where you can't go back, you can only go forward. A lot of times in the relationship, the people who were involved in it are saying, "What are we doing here? Let's get married or let's call it quits." I'd assume Lois and Clark could eventually come to that place. If they do get married, isn't the logical thing for them to try to have children? If they do, what kind of children are they? I think it could be fascinating new ground.I, for one, am very positively hopeful that the series will stay around. If I'm on it or not, I want to watch it.

JEFF: *Is Deborah still involved? I'd heard some rumblings that maybe she was on her way out.*

BRYCE: Those are rumblings. You'd have to ask her.

JEFF: *She's pretty much the linchpin of putting the show together?*

BRYCE: Deborah's the person who wrote the pilot. She's been involved since the beginning. I think there are a lot of people at the network who feel a great deal of comfort knowing she's around here. Deborah has a very distinctive



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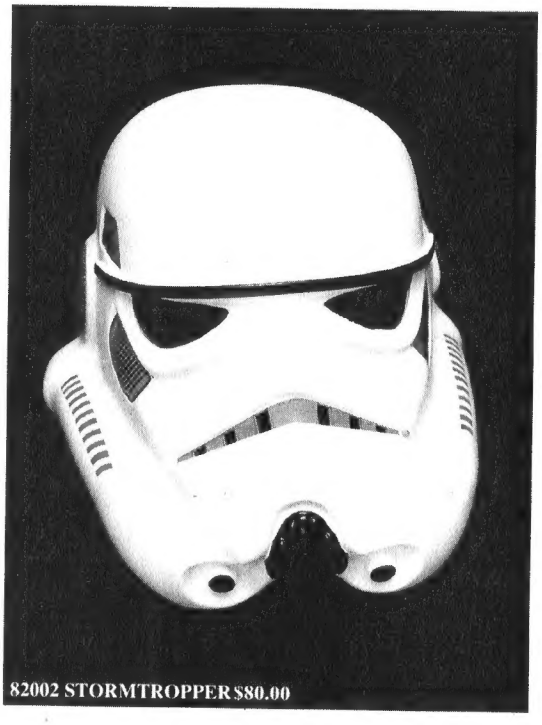

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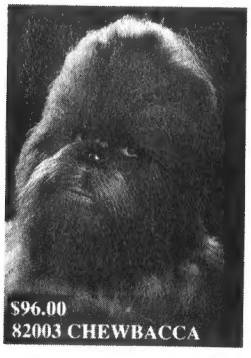

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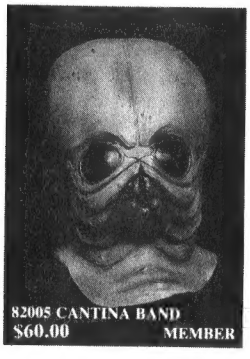

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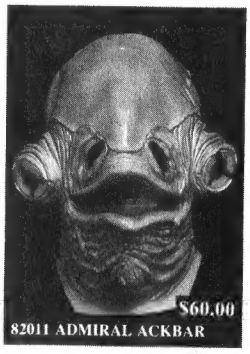

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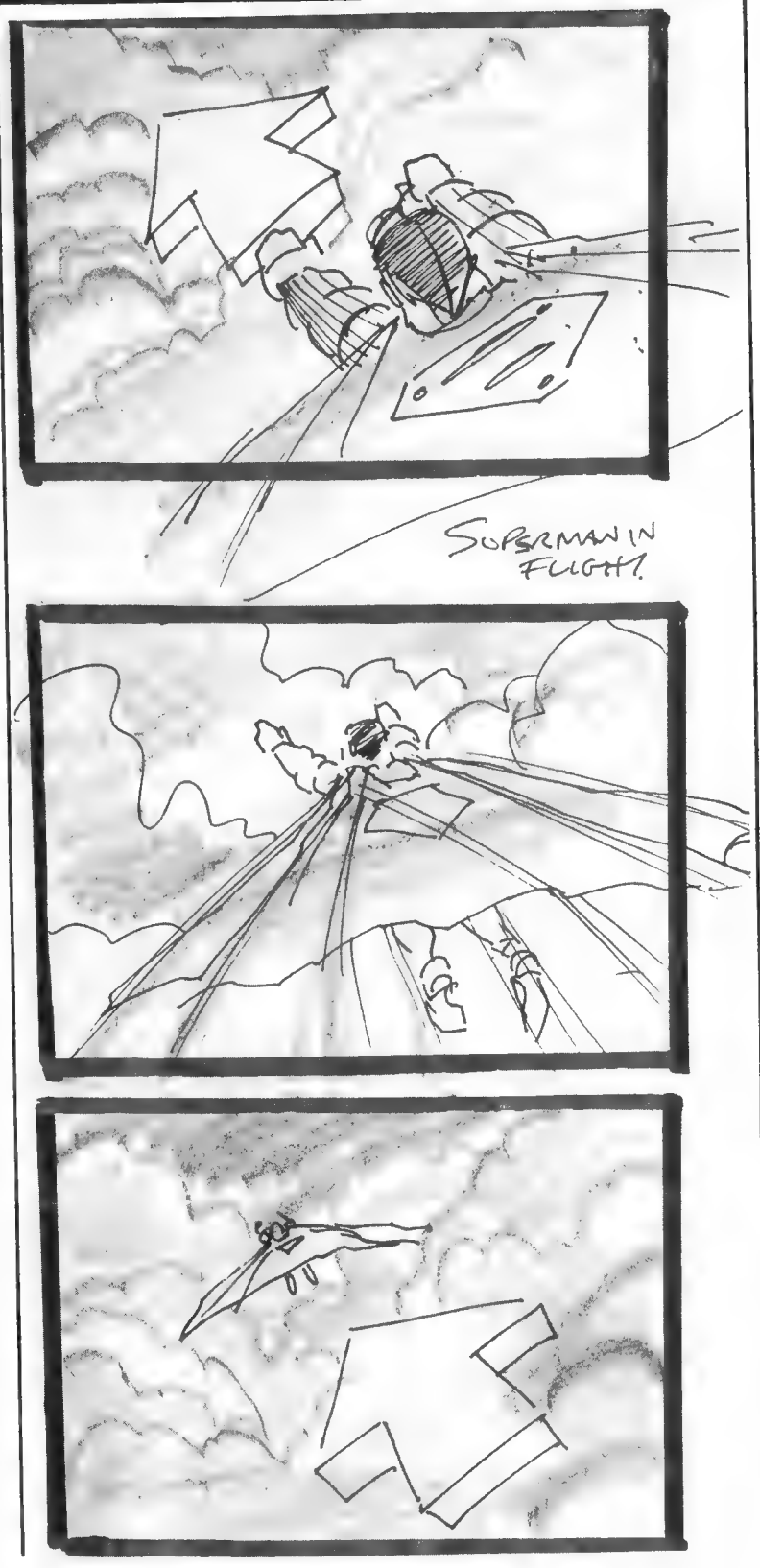
"Superman is great, almost Shakespearean."

voice. I think she's done some absolutely great things. I think it would be a loss to lose her. Having said all that, I think the real star of the show is Superman. I think there is a dynamic that is so great it's almost Shakespearean. I also think the show dynamic of the triangle is something you can't beat. You have Lois, Clark, and Superman. Lois loves Superman. Clark loves Lois. Lois doesn't love Clark. Clark, by being Superman, has created his own blocking character. It doesn't get any better than that. If you're trying to come up with a very simple problem for two people to have, that's as good as it gets. To me, that dynamic is the star of the show that could keep it going for a good, long time.

JEFF: *I'd imagine the show generates a lot of mail.*

BRYCE: It gets a lot for the actors and actresses, as all shows do. It doesn't generate a lot of mail from our end. We don't see a lot of letters criticizing or praising what we've done. Though I have to tell you, there're a couple of computer bulletin boards where people discuss LOIS & CLARK. I've found them enormously helpful. They really hold your feet to the fire on some things. I had an episode called "The Green, Green Glow of Home," which was about Clark going back with Lois to Smallville and encountering kryptonite. I liked the episode a lot but was a little worried what people would think about it, because it was a different type of kryptonite and it was introduced in a different way. I was really heartened to see the bulletin board discussion. This was episode #7 for us. People calling in now may have their own favorite shows that eclipse it at that time, but the consensus of the bulletin board was that this was their favorite episode. I assume that's because people who care enough to be part of a LOIS & CLARK computer bulletin board are really fans and were waiting for the stuff that did something with the legend. I have to tell you, so have I. I've been drawn more to the legend. The first episode I wrote was also the first episode after the pilot, called "Strange Visitor from Another Planet." It was literally about Clark finding out that he came in a spaceship, finding the spaceship, and realizing — and I thought this was an interesting twist for him — that he wasn't Russian. What would you conclude if you were Jonathan and Martha Kent? You found a spaceship with a little baby in it in 1966. You wouldn't say, "Look at this alien." It's a little baby. It's a kid. You'd think, "Did those crazy Russians put something up there? Did our



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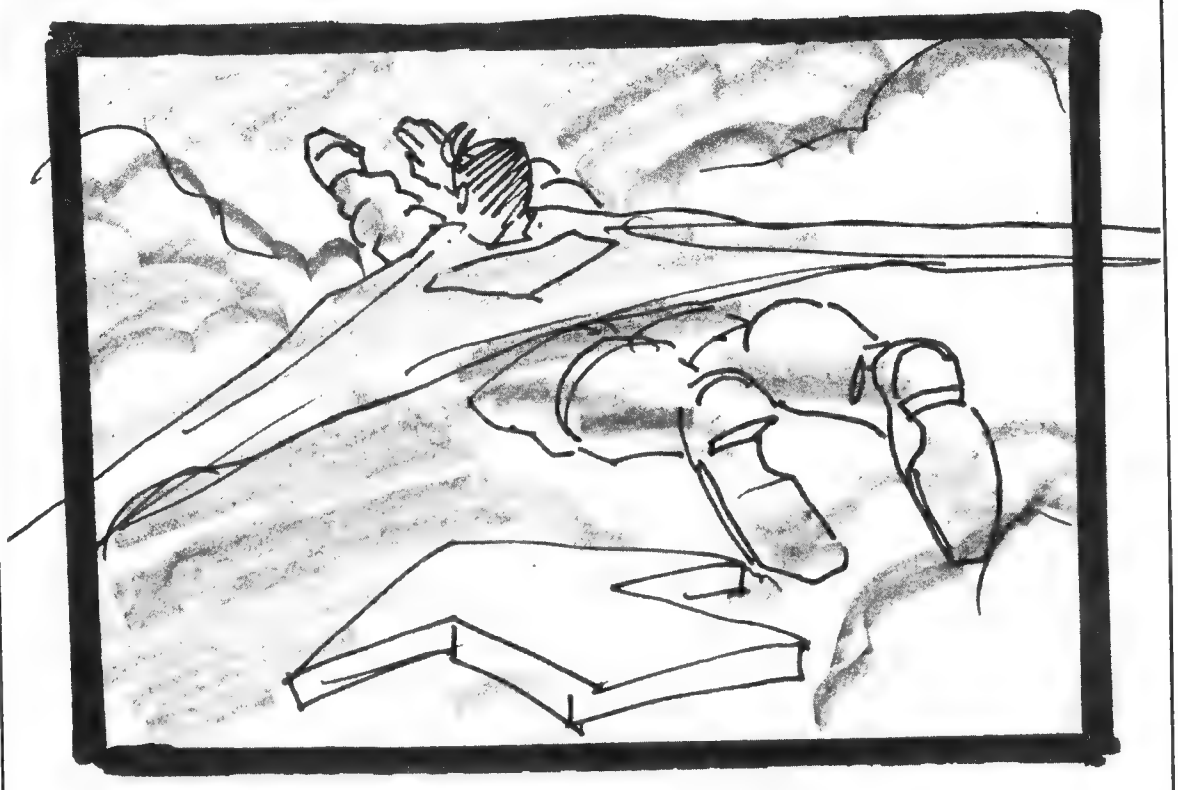
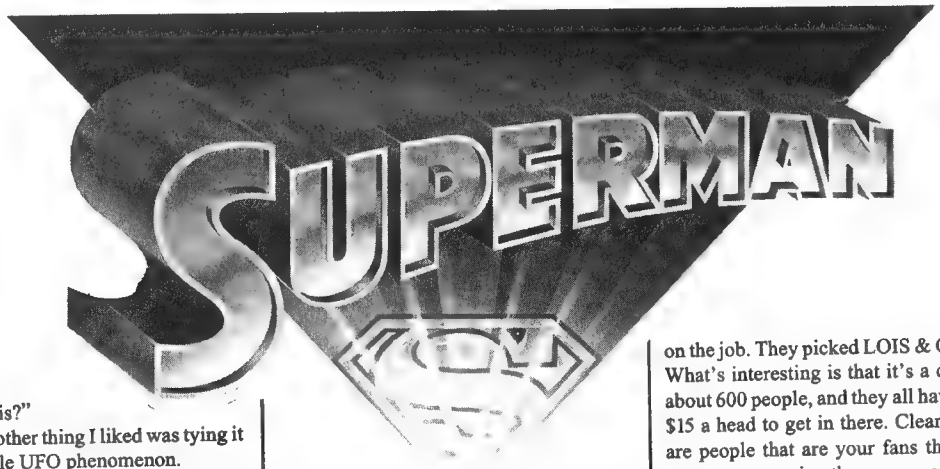
"UFO and Superman mythology dovetail."





people do this?"

PAUL: The other thing I liked was tying it into the whole UFO phenomenon.

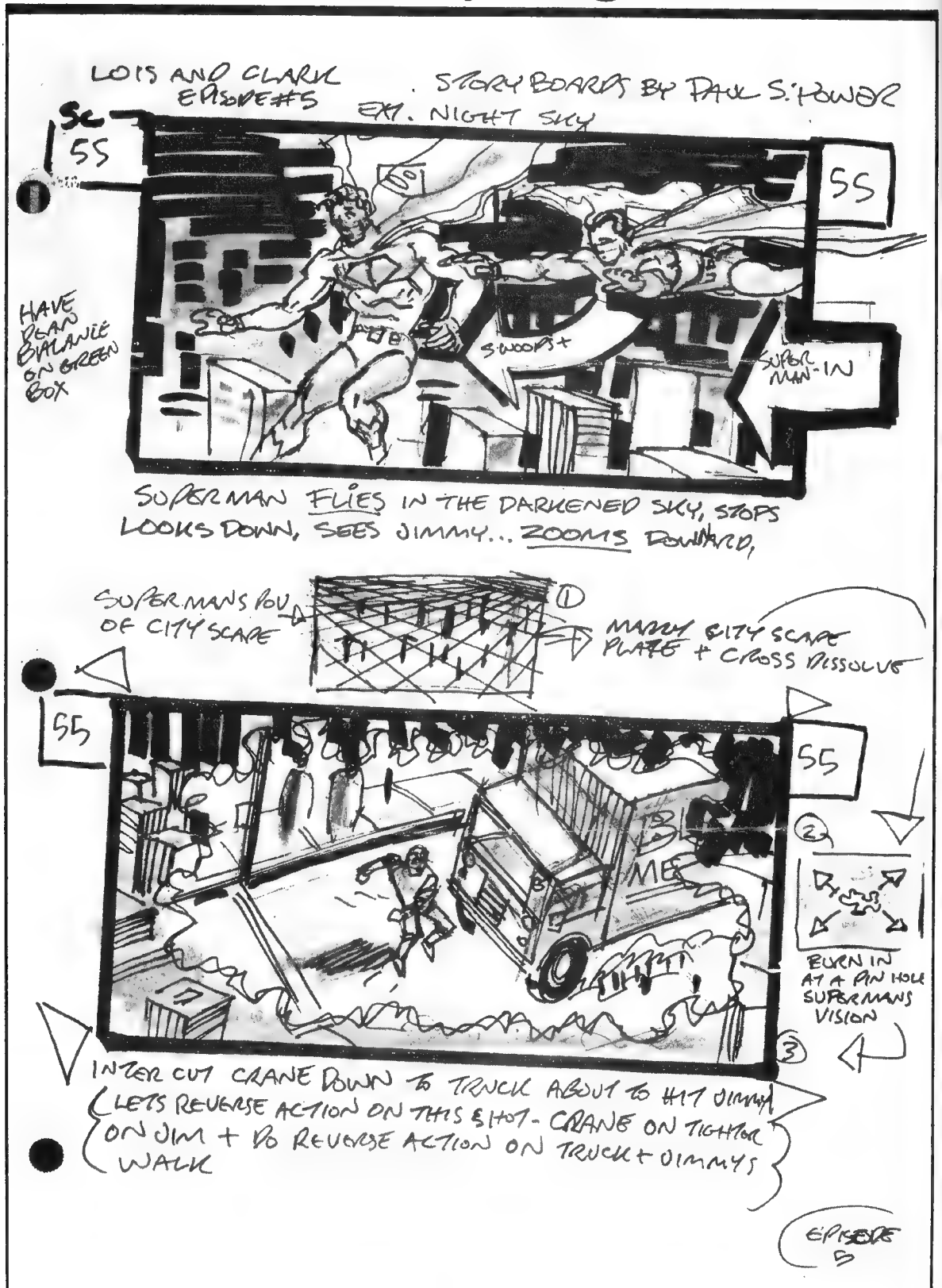
BRYCE: It was a nice co-mingling of mythos there. There's a whole UFO mythology and a whole Superman mythology. If you think about it, they dovetail perfectly. Superman becomes one of the original Operation Blue Book/UFO sightings in the '60s. It fits perfectly with **Dean Cain's** age, which I believe is 28.

JEFF: *The reason I ask about people writing letters and such, I wonder what kind of mail you get from comics fans who are waiting for Doomsday or Brainiac to show up.*

PAUL: Every year here in Hollywood, the Museum of Broadcasting honors certain shows. Usually, they're shows that have long been on, everything back to **Sid Caesar** and OUR SHOW OF SHOWS. Every year they pick a couple of current shows. It's quite an honor to be picked because you don't know that you're timeless at that point. You're very much on the job. They picked LOIS & CLARK. What's interesting is that it's a crowd of about 600 people, and they all have to pay $15 a head to get in there. Clearly, these are people that are your fans that really want to come in. they were extremely positive. I felt really good about it. Although as we were all walking about, and people were saying, "They like us, they really like us," I said, "That's true, except if you think back, **Richard Nixon** could have probably got a pretty good crowd of Republicans, even during Watergate, to tell him how great he was." You never know. I don't know if the vast majority of average viewers like us, but we do have our fans.

JEFF: *But no one is beating your door*

"Nobody knows anything in this town;


LOIS AND CLARK
EPISODE #5
STORY BOARDS BY PAUL S. POWER
EXT. NIGHT SKY
Sc 55
55
HAVE REAR PROJECTION ON GREEN BOX
SWOOPS +
SUPER MAN - IN
SUPERMAN FLIES IN THE DARKENED SKY, STOPS LOOKS DOWN, SEES JIMMY... ZOOMS DOWNARD,
SUPERMANS POV OF CITY SCAPE
1
MATTE CITY SCAPE PLATE + CROSS DISSOLVE
55
55
2
BURN IN AT A PIN HOLE SUPERMANS VISION
3
INTER CUT CRANE DOWN TO TRUCK ABOUT TO HIT JIMMY
LETS REVERSE ACTION ON THIS SHOT - CRANE ON TIGHTER ON JIM + DO REVERSE ACTION ON TRUCK + JIMMYS WALK
EPISODE 5

it's an incredibly subjective business."

down asking for more comics-related stories?

BRYCE: No, except for the comics fans. There are some hard-core comics fans that would like it. But I think even the comics fans enjoy the alternate reality of what LOIS & CLARK is. Don't you?

PAUL: I like the take on this. That's why I was happy that there was someone on it who's a genuine comic-book fan as well. I was beginning to feel, almost like on BOB, that there was an appreciation but it wasn't to the bone. They weren't hard-core. I consider myself hard-core. Then I met Bryce, and Bryce was a real hard-core fan. This is good. We can talk about it. We get excited.

BRYCE: As I think about it as you're talking, you're absolutely right. I was talking about fans of the show. You're actually talking about what the comics fans are asking for. I did a speech before some comic gathering.

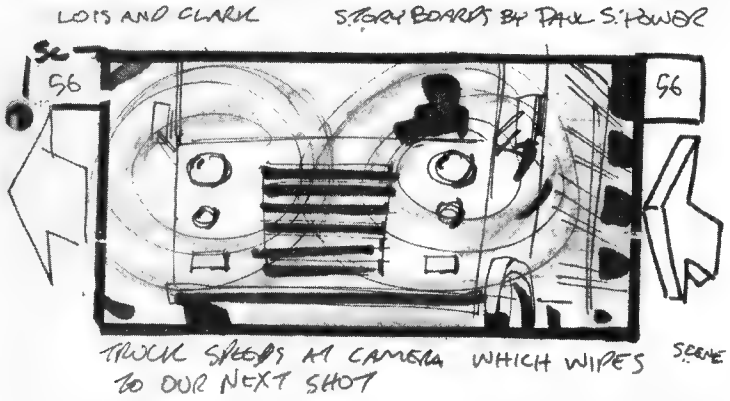
PAUL: Comic Book Artists Professional Society. And I was stuck here working on a green screen and I couldn't make it.

BRYCE: So, I did my little vamp there. There were a lot of questions like why we don't have Brainiac and that stuff. In a perfect world, it'd be nice to have some of that. Probably, and this is a prediction, they'll do more of that next season. The problem is, every time you start a new show, there are 1,000 cooks. Since nobody knows anything in this town, and since it's an incredibly subjective business to begin with, and since anybody's opinion could theoretically be as valid as anybody else's, you'll get all sorts of people trying to come up with the rules of what's going to make the thing work. For better or worse, what started to go down at the beginning of this season was there should be this line that you don't cross. Superman had super powers, but he was sort of alone at that end of the universe, and everything else should be a projection, maybe a few minutes into the future. Everything should have a technology base or something else. I don't know if I agree with that. I can't say the season suffered by virtue of making that decision, but I would imagine if you're talking to someone this time next year, they'll have done a little more of that stuff.

JEFF: *I thought the episode that was originally broadcast on March 12th could have been your take on Bizarro.*

BRYCE: Absolutely.

JEFF: *There was even a reference by Lois saying he looked really bizarre. Someone in there was saying, "Hey, comics fans, in case you're watching closely, this is kind of for you."*



BRYCE: That script was written first, and that was one of my notes on the draft, can't Lois complain about this "bizarro" character? At least it's a cheap thrill and fun, and everybody liked it. It's also interesting about that episode. You have a hero who's as powerful as Superman. Who are you going to put him up against? If you follow this rule, nothing can cross this line, it gets harder and harder to find real jeopardy for him. As a consequence, you have to look for something that can match it. What can match him but a clone of him? A lot of shows that are struggling in their 12th season, they'll have the evil twin of **Linda Gray** come out. Well, for us to go to the evil twin in the first season was a bit premature, except that it was Superman, and where else are you going to get it?

PAUL: The nice thing was that it had **Dean Cain** as a young kid. For me, this is the one I had to do the most drawing on, because it had the most special effects. It was fun for me to work on, but it was a tough show for everyone to do.

JEFF: *Do you notice ratings-wise that certain kinds of shows do better than other kinds of shows? This is an action-oriented show. Some episodes are more introspective. Does it seem to matter?*

BRYCE: I don't think there's any correlation. We had a pretty good number with the week I'd written a little teaser that had nothing to do with anything about Clark playing basketball with **Bo Jackson.** It did a pretty good number. Who's to say it didn't do that number because Bo and Clark/Bo and Dean got their picture in TV GUIDE? Maybe that gave it a bump. The material rarely gives the material a bump. If anything, it gives a bump to the next week. In other words, if enough people saw the evil twin episode or our Bizarro episode and thought this is what they wanted to see, then maybe next week's episode would do better.

JEFF: *Were all your scripts this season more steeped in comics lore than other ones?*

BRYCE: I think so. In effect, they represent my philosophy about this. Jeopardy is a hard thing to establish with Superman, so you have to look for different places for jeopardy. Let me give you an example from the episodes about what I think provided a real jeopardy for Superman. In the first episode ("Strange Visitor") the jeopardy was that Lois could be hurt or that his identity would be lost. That gives us a real jeopardy. But those have nothing to do with Doomsday stalking in. It's a lot easier to do Doomsday in a comic book than on TV. In "The

"Our Superman is a little more vulnerable

Green Green Glow of Home," the real jeopardy is that Clark becomes a normal guy because of the kryptonite and that this Trask madman can kick his ass. Clark has to protect himself and his family that he loves strictly through the force of his goodness. Finally, I did an episode called "All Shook Up," about a meteorite that's on impact with Earth, that owes something to "Panic in the Sky" from the earlier TV series.

JEFF: *I'm glad you mentioned that. I felt the same way. I thought, I wonder if anyone up there remembers that episode in the black-and-white SUPERMAN series.*

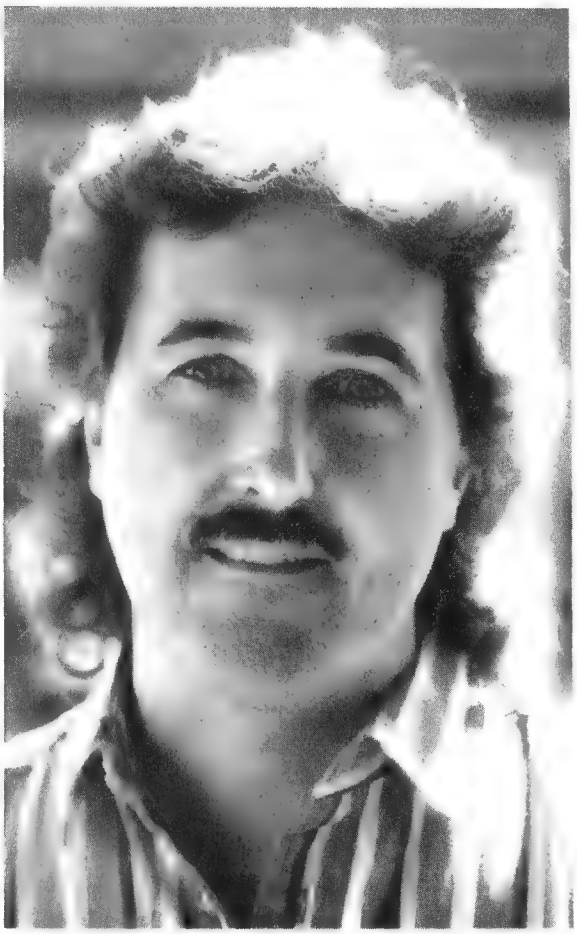
BRYCE: There's not a line of dialogue in the thing that has anything to do with the earlier one. But we just wanted to see where we could take it with our effects now. But again, it goes back to the jeopardy. What's the jeopardy? At least, the meteorite might have an impact on Superman. Our Superman is a little more vulnerable than the comic-book Superman. Hitting a meteorite? That could give you a pretty big headache. He ends up getting amnesia and falling naked to Earth. It blows his costume off. The meteorite's still in the way, Superman can't be found. The jeopardy is to everybody on the planet. They're all different levels of jeopardy. I think we got on more shaky ground when we had things like the Toasters, who were guys with these flame-throwing guns. The truth is, that's a walk in the park for Superman.

JEFF: *Did they come to you specifically and say, bring us something you know is closer to the comics?*

BRYCE: No.

JEFF: *You're bringing elements of the show that most of the other writers aren't bringing to it. They (supervisors) don't notice that there are things coming into play here that aren't in there other scripts?*

BRYCE: We've done other stuff that's more comics-oriented as the season's gone on. **Dan Levine** wrote an episode called "The Foundling," which picked up where "Strange Visitor" had placed it in terms of the spaceship in terms of the orb he found and the glove, and played with some of that.



Bryce Zabel

JEFF: *It's more of a private thing that you're going to introduce some elements when you do a screenplay?*

BRYCE: I've tried whenever possible. I don't think you write the episode for the comics fans. You just don't do that. There aren't enough of them to keep it on the air. You have to write the episode for the average guy who's watching. But, hey, there's no reason to kiss off the comics fan. There's no reason to alienate them from the show. You want to embrace them.

JEFF: *Which is what you, as a comics fan, can bring to the material, whether anyone else knows it or not.*

BRYCE: I don't think you set out to do that. I can't say I had any grand design. I was just drawn to this material.

JEFF: *What's the demographic strength of LOIS & CLARK?*

BRYCE: It's changed a little bit. We have a strong representation among kids. And I think there are a lot of women who like this show. At the beginning of the season, it was a fairly strong split: men were watching SEAQUEST and women were watching us. It's met a little bit on that right now. We're getting numbers of both groups right now, as well as kids. It does give you certain obligations to try to write a show that works on two levels.

JEFF: *Or three.*

BRYCE: Exactly. But you certainly don't want to chase the kids away, though 8:00 is too late for some kids who want to watch it. However, you also want their parents to enjoy it. You have to work it on the MOONLIGHTING-esque level on one hand, but . . . what six-year-old kid isn't going to get a thrill seeing this guy in costume?

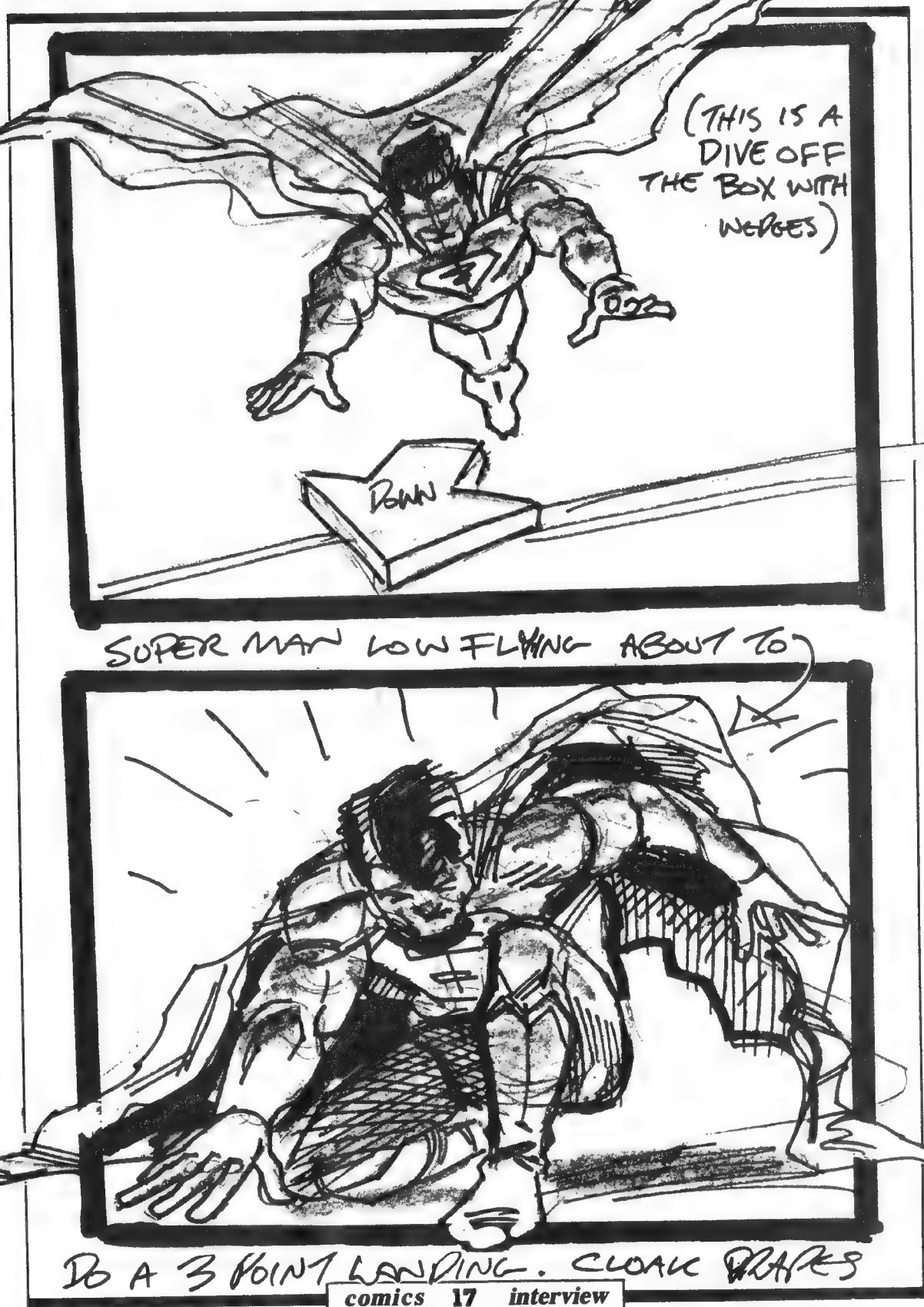
JEFF: *It's an extremely delicate balance. I can't imagine a show that would be tougher that's on the air right now. It tends to attract these widely diverse groups.*

BRYCE: I don't think it's that tough. I've found these to be the easiest scripts I've ever written. They've flown out of my word processor faster than anything else I've written.

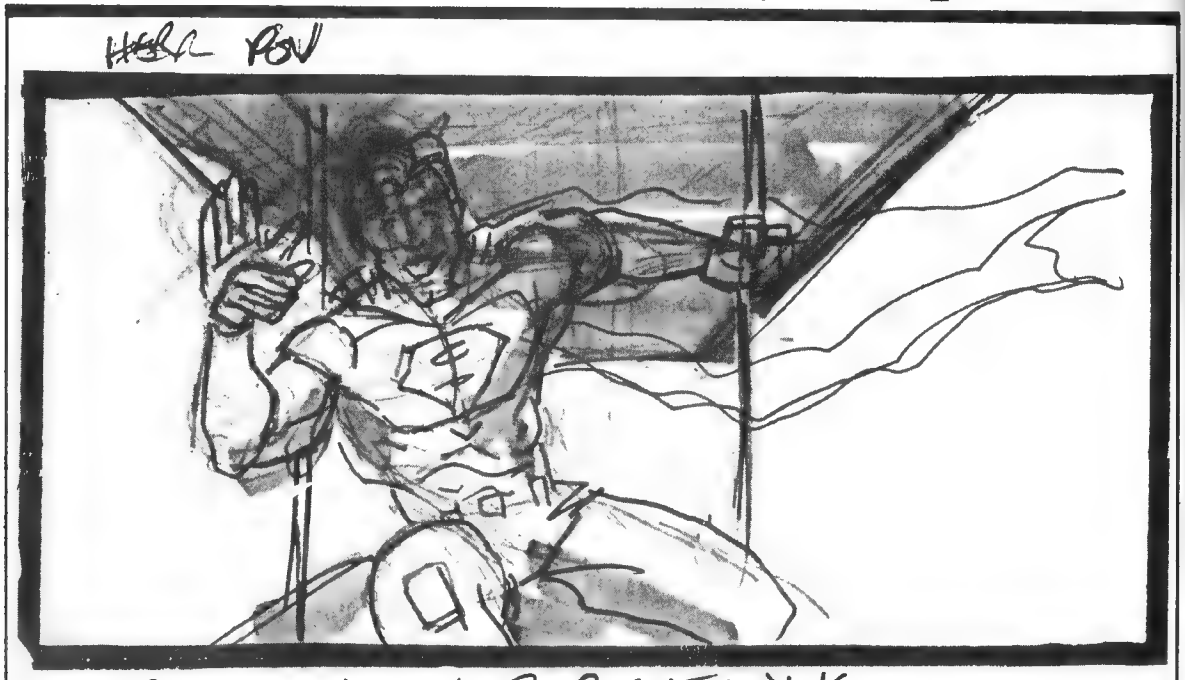
PAUL: Is that because it's been with you for so long? You've had an apprenticeship in comics, and enjoyed them, and now you have the chance to work something on this.

BRYCE: I think you just let it fly. I don't think you set out to appeal on two levels. I think you just come up with the story and think you're doing things that will work. I have had a problem with certain of our

than the comic-book Superman."


(THIS IS A DIVE OFF THE BOX WITH WEDGES)
OOZ
BOOM
SUPER MAN LOW FLYING ABOUT TO
DO A 3 POINT LANDING. CLOAK BRAKES
UNDER LITE SHOT + TOP LIGHT

"With Dean, damn, this guy *is* Superman.



SUPER MAN ON BI PLANE WING

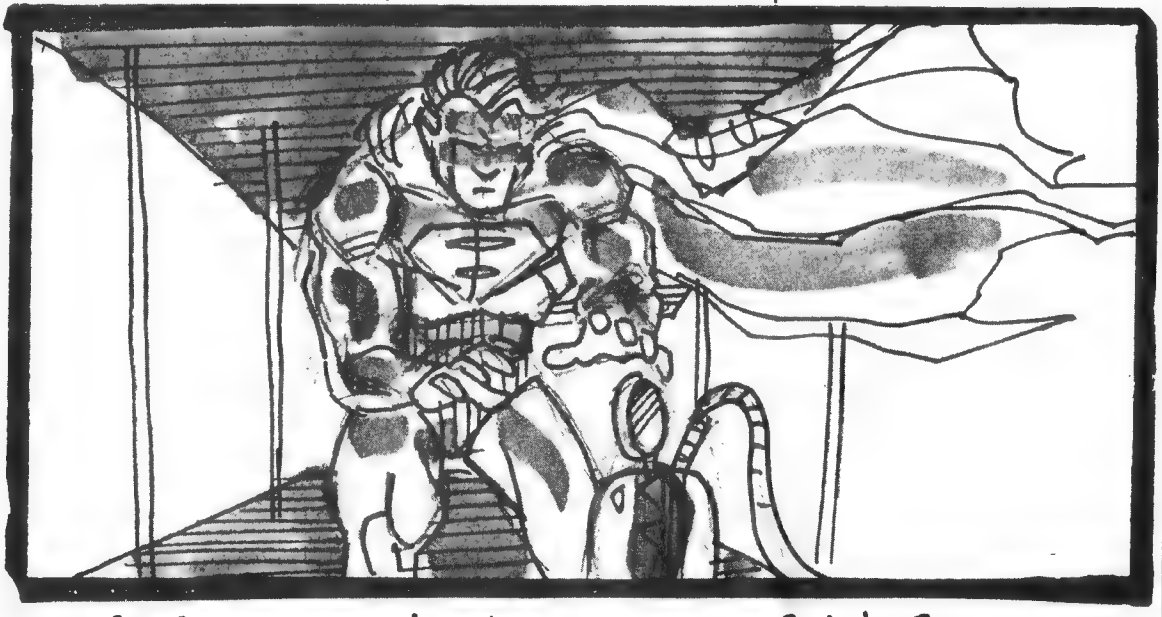
episodes, doing things that I wouldn't have done *vis a vis* kids are watching. I have a seven-year-old and a five-year-old who watch all the time. I wasn't wild about the notion that Clark was seen pretending to drink in one episode.

PAUL: That was the Toasters one.

JEFF: *The love potion . . .*

BRYCE: My kids saw that as a Valentine's piece. I thought it was a very funny episode. It was as far off on the other side of the scale. It was so non-comic-book. They'll all be different. You do have an obligation with the Superman character that kids really care about that character. I don't think you should write it because you want to make points with your peers in the entertainment industry and write this very adult Superman, I think you should consider who's watching the show.

PAUL: With **Dean Cain,** when I first met him, he was asking me, how does the character fly? We had a chance to do that.



SUPER MAN ON WING LUNGES IN FOR THE SPANISH FLY TANK'S STEEL HOSE

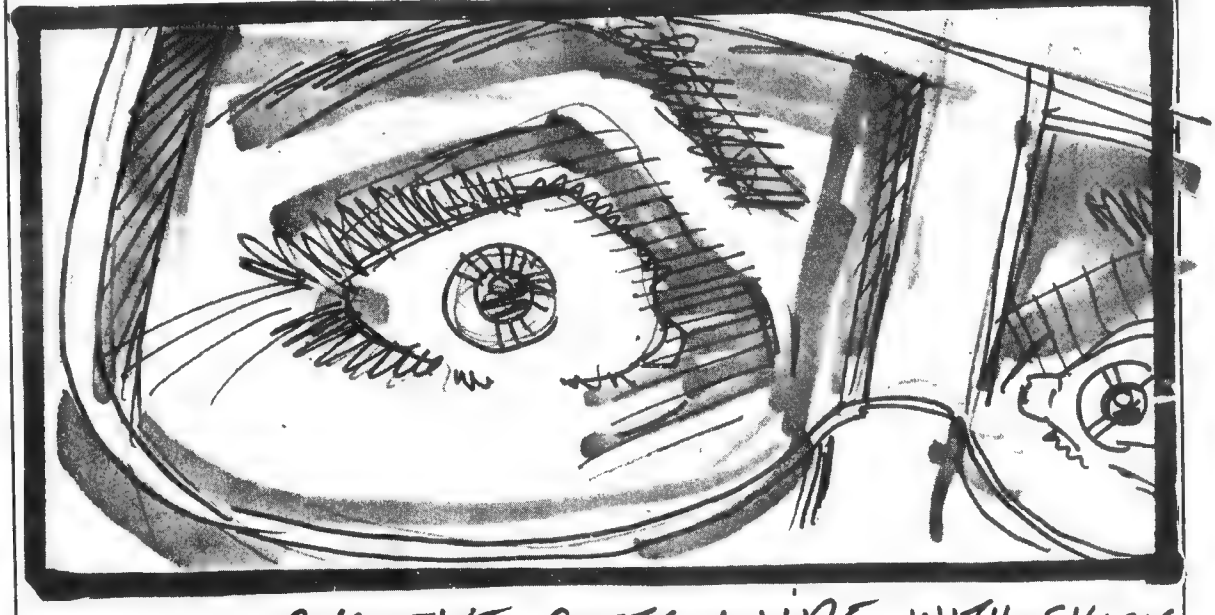
And Teri Hatcher . . . I'm convinced."

MIRANDA: "GULP!"

With the limited gear and time we've got, we can only go so far. But we try to do the maximum and get some sort of semblance of how the character flies. We have to go in fast. With Dean, he generally likes kids. When kids are on the set, he spends time with them. I go, "Damn, this guy *is* Superman." There's something about his Clark Kent. He's a real person. And the way **Teri Hatcher** plays her character, she's so self-possessed, that you can understand that she doesn't recognize Clark/Superman. I'm convinced she doesn't know who the character is.

JEFF: *How in the world do you make it work so no one knows Clark is Superman in this show?*

BRYCE: In the beginning this season, a lot of us had a lot of problems with it. It is, essentially, ridiculous. Superman looks like Clark. Clark looks like Superman. A pair of glasses isn't going to disguise anybody. We don't even have the hat that **George Reeves** got to wear. So there is a



MIRANDA'S EYE GETS WIDE WITH SHOCK AT SEEING STORY BOARDS

"Here's irony: my wife used to be very

PIPE LEAKS SUPERMAN IS SPRAYED BY SEX/SPANISH FLY.

great deal of similarity. There's no getting around that. It is a problem. My response is, the fact that Lois doesn't recognize Clark to be Superman is the "magic if" of the series. It's been the "magic if" for nearly 60 years of Superman. If you don't buy it, you're not going to enjoy the show. There's nothing anybody from a writing or directorial point of view is ever going to be able to do to change that particular reference point about Clark and Superman. The thing you do is not call attention to it. You don't bring it up. The one thing I think has worn thin over the years that an audience in 1994 wouldn't accept that an audience in 1954 might have accepted is the notion (in the early show and comics) that Lois was convinced that Clark was Superman and she was going to prove it. That calls attention to your problems. That makes you tear your fists out of the ceiling and go, "You dumb bitch! Of course!" We've had a few veiled references. We've had some fun with that stuff. But, we've never said Lois suspects Clark is Superman. We probably won't say it. To do it is really to

MIRANDA'S POV - SUPERMAN BENDS HOSE IN TO A HEART.

good friends with Jerry Siegel's daughter."

SUPERMAN INHALES THE SPANISH FLY AND IS TAKEN BY ITS CHARMS

get yourself in trouble. The bottom line is that Lois doesn't know he's Superman. You want to have a good time, buy into that and let's get on with the show.

JEFF: *I like your phrase "magic if." Do you have any idea what Jerry Siegel thinks of the show? (Joe Shuster didn't live long enough to see it.)*

BRYCE: At the beginning of the season, after a few scripts had been written, the DC Comics people were out here. We had this get-together at this chic restaurant in Santa Monica. Here's the irony. My wife used to be very good friends with **Jerry Siegel's** daughter. We'd always known it was a sad thing for the **Siegel** family. Laura didn't use his name. She didn't want to have to talk about Superman. She didn't like to talk about Superman. Their family always felt it was a sore point for them.

When Jerry and his wife came in, I explained that my wife and their daughter used to be good friends. As a consequence, I ended up sitting at the table with

SHAKES IT OFF — YADDA, YADDA, YADDA,

"Jerry Siegel and his partner did something

SUPERMAN BLOWS SPANISH FLY BACK AT MIRANDA.

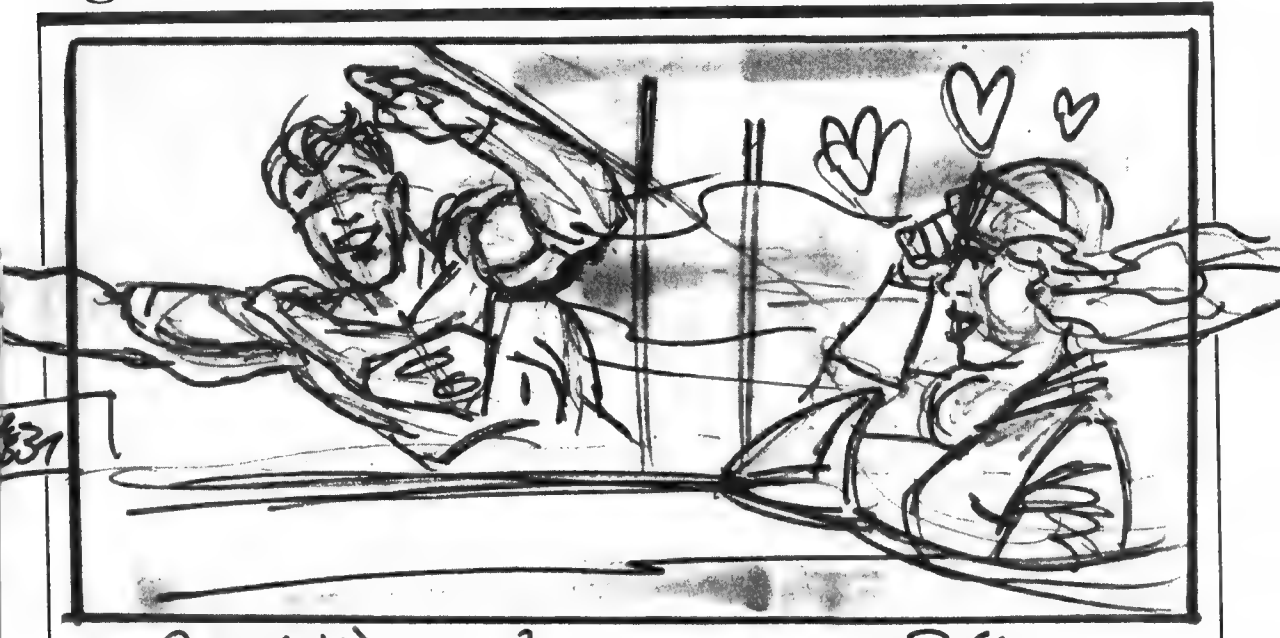
Jerry Siegel, sitting next to him the entire party. The irony is that all the DC Comics people hadn't met this guy, and they were in awe of him, too. I'm the guy sitting next to him at the table. I had brought a copy of "Strange Visitor from Another Planet" because I wanted the DC Comics guys to sign my script because I'm a comics fan. I'm thinking, this is great. I get a chance to get a signed script with all the DC Comics artists. This is exciting.

Jerry's wife says to me, "I really want to tell Laura that we ran into you. Do you have a business card?" I tell her I really don't have anything. She asks, "Do you have anything with your name on it?" This script is sitting on the table. I go, "Well, I have this script." She goes, "You have one of the scripts from LOIS & CLARK? Gosh, if you wouldn't mind, could we . . .?" I say, "Sure." She says, "Would you mind signing it?"

I felt like WAYNE'S WORLD. I wanted to get on my knees and go, "I'm not worthy!" It seemed ridiculous to me that I'd be asked to do this, because I was in total awe of this guy. I sat there thinking, what can I write this guy without looking like a raving lunatic? I

SUPERMAN BLOWS THE STORM BACK

right. We made sure they get credit."



SUPERMAN "WILL YOU FOLLOW ME?"
MIRANDA — "ANY WHERE ~~BABY~~"

didn't come up with anything perfect, but I think I wrote something to the effect of, "If we see, it's because we've stood on the shoulder of a giant." It was the only thing I could come up with. I meant it.

I don't know how he's perceived in the industry, because I don't know if he's on a level with **Jack Kirby.** But I have to tell you, what **Jerry Siegel** did was capture a simplicity of a relationship in a pristine perfect form that is such a rock-solid foundation that thousands of people in those 60 years have made their living off that character. It's a damn shame that **Jerry Siegel** didn't live a better life because of it, but he and his partner did something right. I'm still in awe of it. It's almost Shakespearean. A guy sends his only son. The kid grows up an alienated visitor in a strange land then ultimately finds purpose by trying to become more human, feeling like he's adopted, feeling beholden to try to do good things to help them, the Lois/Clark/Superman triangle . . . it's great.

JEFF: *Did he watch the show?*

BRYCE: I don't know. I've not spoken to him since the show. He seemed like an

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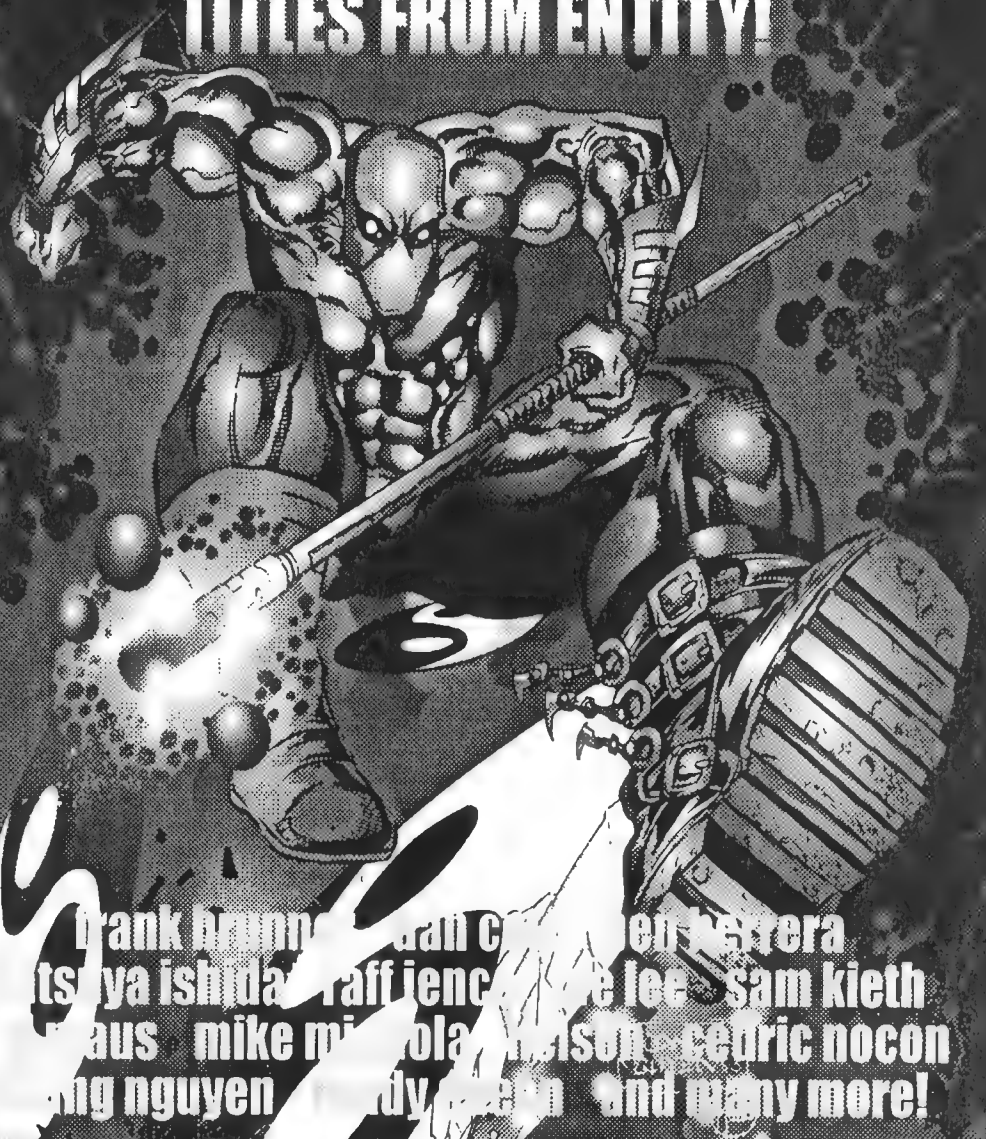

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...ng nguyen ...dy ... and many more!

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ZEN COLOR #3
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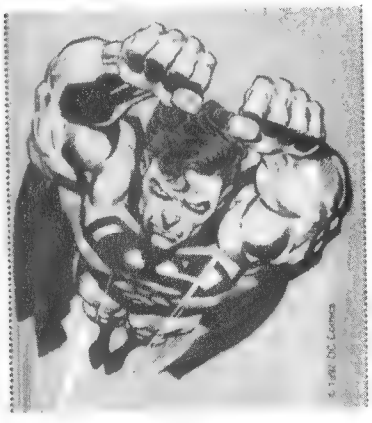
"Comics people have to realize this is not a comic."

incredibly nice man. He seemed very supportive of what we were doing. I think he probably thinks it's fine. I hope so.

JEFF: *That would be the ultimate treat.*

BRYCE: I don't know what his financial dealings are with various people, but from a credit point of view people have gone out of the way to make sure he gets the credit. If anything, the only criticism I have with the publicity campaign for LOIS & CLARK is that I think it almost sometimes read as if Deborah Joy created Superman. I know she doesn't feel this way, and it's not a slam on Deborah Joy, it's just the way that the media gravitates how to describe something. It's a shame because we all know we didn't create Superman. And I'm sure she knows it, too. We want to pay credit where it's due.

PAUL: When I first worked on the show, I handed over a copy of WIZARD magazine. I was talking to **John Shea,** who plays Lex Luthor. When I went up to see him, they were about to blow up the Carlin building. As I was about to give him the WIZARD magazine Superman special, **Mike Carlin** turns around. He's like, "What are you doing here?" I told him I worked on the show. John introduces me to **Carlin,** not knowing I already knew him. The thing is that John wanted to know a lot about the character. He didn't just want to play his interpretation of the character, he wanted to understand the history of the character. That's what I found nice about everybody playing their parts. The actors have a concern about the characters they're playing.

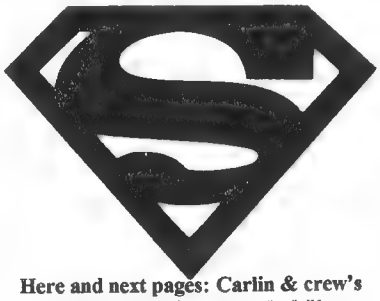


BRYCE: I'm going to give you the down side of that. The actors do that. But all this material that was brought in to try to bring people quickly up to speed on Superman. Incidentally, I think WIZARD did an absolutely stunning piece. If you need to spend an evening and catch up on Superman, that WIZARD special was it. We had several producers here who wrote scripts who never spent five minutes with that magazine. I certainly never saw them sitting around with it.

JEFF: *You were probably the only one who didn't have to, and no one else did.*

BRYCE: I'm not trying to pat myself on the back. Here's a resource. This kind of thing happens. People don't want to taint their take.

JEFF: *We mentioned Mike Carlin and DC. What is their level of involvement on the show?*



Here and next pages: Carlin & crew's bestselling take on comics' #1 superhero. In four short panels, we reprise the Death of Superman . . .

PAUL: What I found nice is that at a convention before the show started, when they were doing the pilot, **Deborah Joy Levine** spent time with the DC people. It was a good meeting where **Carlin** and all the creative people who were available (about 98% of those that worked on the comic books) had a few round table meetings. There was a nice attempt to talk about the character, how you feel about it. I did my drawings quickly, and Bryce and I showed them around the lot. We gave him a nice tour, and they seemed stoked about the whole thing. What I liked is that there was an attempt between the Warner Bros. comics (DC) and the Warner Bros. studio (Lorimar) to have a meeting of the minds, which I thought went a lot further than other shows.

BRYCE: The truth is, before this big round table meeting that DC had

requested, I was basically told, shut up. Don't tell them what we're doing. Don't let them know. They'll just screw it up. As a consequence, I ended up sitting at this meeting listening to people posture, watching our side not wanting to tell them what was going on, and listening to their side trying to be involved. It obviously wasn't something the creative side over here felt comfortable with at the time.

How do they feel about it? You'd have to ask **Mike Carlin.** I'm not saying anybody's right or wrong. Scripts come out late. As a consequence, it's not always do-able to ensure everybody gets input. I also think the comics people have to realize that this is not a comic and that other people are running the show.

Having said that, I think a lot of times they felt like, "Gosh, you send us the script at the last possible second so any comment we make is just around the margins." On the other hand, I know some people over here feel like, "These comics people are just like pinheads because they won't listen to reason; they're giving us grief; they have rules." It's true.

Mike Carlin has very strong feelings about how to protect the Superman character. My opinion is, that's his job. My opinion is also, sometimes **Mike**

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"Carlin I consider a smart and good man."

Carlin has to acknowledge that he won't win all of his fights. He knows this. I've had talks with **Carlin**, who I consider to be a smart guy and good man. We've talked about a couple of things where he's said, "I've had an opinion one way at one time and realized I was wrong based on how it was received."

The best example of that is in the pilot, in the montage where Clark was trying on all the different outfits before he stumbles across the Superman outfit. **Carlin** was adamantly opposed to that in script, in concept. That called attention to the guy in the costume. He thought it called attention to a problem. But it was the highest testing piece of the pilot. Everybody, but everybody, loves that piece. I can't tell you the number of conversations that I had where people say, "I love the bit where his mom is trying on the costumes."

PAUL: Even at the San Diego Comics Con, the fans went nuts. They loved it. Especially where he turned out with that Captain America costume for a second.

BRYCE: **Carlin** admits that: "That really worked. Who am I to say it didn't work?"

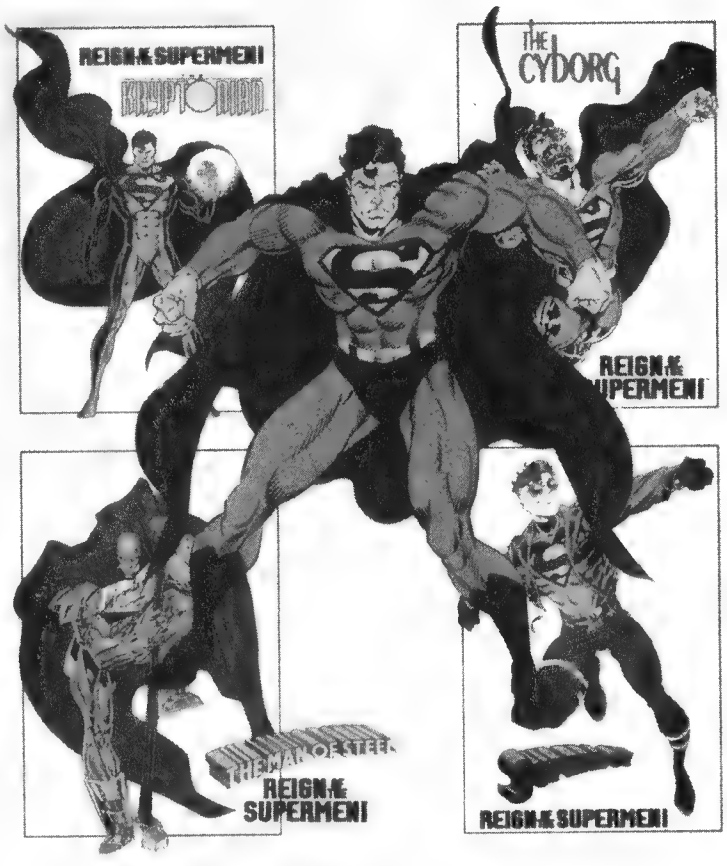
JEFF: *You're under no obligation to stay true to what they're asking you to do?*

BRYCE: I've not seen the contract between the comics and the show, but clearly there's a contractual relationship that means they must be consulted. We tell them our storylines. We give them little paragraphs that explain what's going on. They get copies of the scripts as they come out.

JEFF: *Have you seen an example of their nixing a story idea?*

BRYCE: For example, I mentioned "The Foundling," the one that **Dan Levine** had written. I wanted to do a trilogy: "Strange Visitor," "The Green Green Glow of Home," and then I wanted to do another episode about the same thing that "The Foundling" was about. I had a slightly different take. Then Deborah assigned me to do the "All Shook Up" episode about the meteorite and gave "The Foundling" to Dan. I think at the time, Dan was thinking it was pretty cool. I think he'd asked for the assignment, so he obviously wanted to do it. The take he had got vetoed by DC Comics. It became a major issue. As a consequence. it didn't happen and Dan had to come up with something else for "The Foundling."

In fact, another example was in the beginning of the season, where Dan and I kicked around a number of other things. At the very beginning, it was Deborah, myself and Dan. Deborah would be off at meetings, and Dan and I would be locked up in a room together telling each other silly stories for awhile. One of the things we'd discussed was the possibility that Jor-El had actually come to Earth on an intergalactic walk-about, much as in Australia where guys go off on walk-abouts to check things about. Jor-El was on this intergalactic walk-about. It ended up 1945-46 as World War II was ending and one of these guys he'd met in the war came home to Kansas. He'd hung out with this guy. When he went back to Krypton and realized Krypton was going to blow, he said, "I'm going to send my child to this guy."



. . . and in another four panels, for those of you on another planet over the past year, we reprise the Reign of the Supermen . . .

The storyline we were developing would be that Clark was literally sent to Earth, not as an accident, but was selected. What had happened was, over the course of time, the fellow Jor-El knew (we'd called him "Joel" in this) would have sold the farm to the Kents. So, even though the ship went to the right place, the property ownership had changed, and that's why the Kents stumbled across it. We thought it was cool. We were ready to write a graphic novel about it. At this point, HOMEFRONT had been cancelled. I was thinking, we had all these great costumes and sets on the lot. We could do it in black and white. Jor-El would be played by **Dean Cain** in the '40s. It would give this whole new thing to the mythos.

Carlin just went ballistic about this. (Aside: Mike, if you're reading this, I define "ballistic" as adamantly opposed, not insane.) He felt this violated something he'd held dear, that Clark was the first and only Superman on Earth. Jor-El couldn't possibly have gone there. They also have these various rules about how you couldn't have traveled out of Krypton. I didn't buy that stuff so much, but I respect his opinion there. There must be some kind of contractual thing, because we couldn't do it.

PAUL: But it's a good story.

JEFF: *I'd read that graphic novel.*

BRYCE: Another aside to **Mike Carlin:** That's a great graphic novel idea. If that's not an ELSEWORLDS, I don't know what is.

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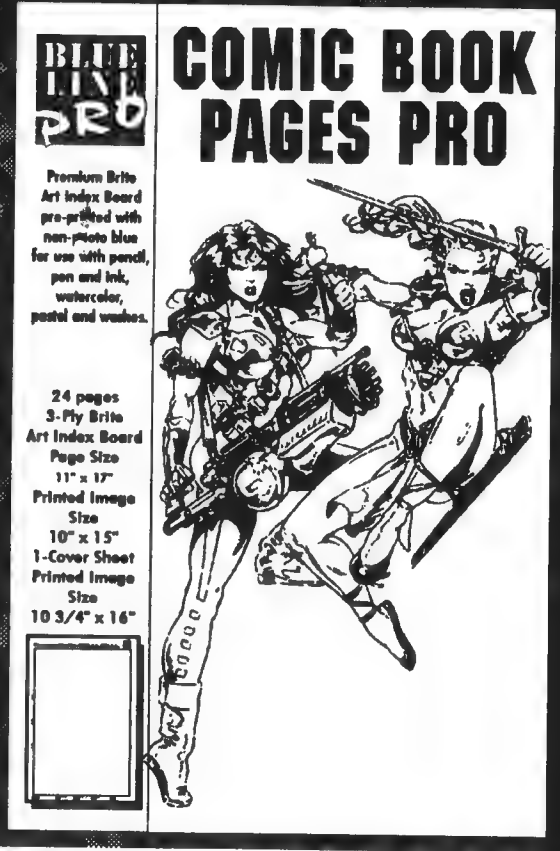

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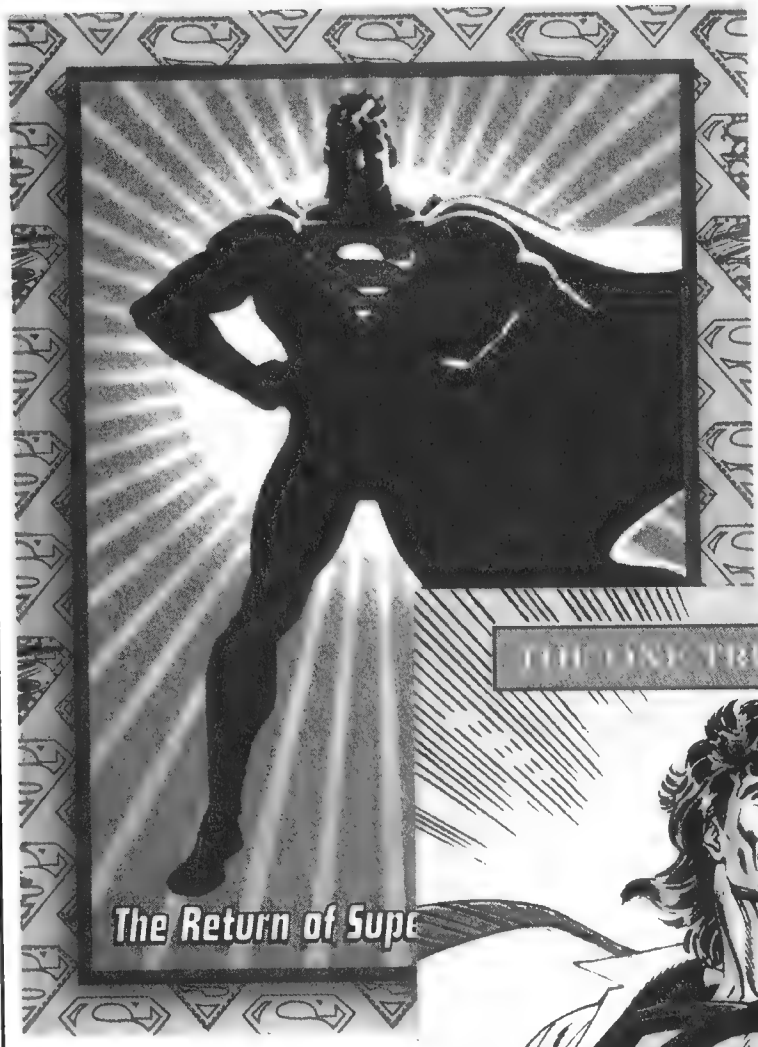
"Flash on TV: his proper place may be a guest shot."



Lois home or anything but the fact that we don't own the rights to Lana Lang or Pete Ross because they were introduced in the SUPERBOY magazine and all this show owns the rights to is the SUPERMAN magazines. To me, this is insanity. **Jeanette Kahn** — you have to realize that DC Comics owns all these characters. Wouldn't it be in their best interests to let us do a little cross-mingling here?

PAUL: A one or two episode deal.

BRYCE: One reason they don't want to do it is because, like with Batman, they don't want to screw up an incredibly lucrative feature film franchise. They don't want to do Flash because they've already tried him on TV. On the other hand, his proper place may be a two-episode guest shot.

JEFF: *What about Superman-related characters or villains other than Luthor?*

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JEFF: *Fans of the comics and show will want to know whether there's any talk about introducing another DC character into the show. Is there any possibility of a guest star, another superhero?*

BRYCE: I would say right now, no chance. But naturally, if the show stays on, it'll happen. But there are a lot of problems. Let me give you an example. During "The Green Green Glow of Home," I was going to have Clark come back home, because Lana Lang was marrying Pete Ross. Clark was going to ask Lois to come home with him because he didn't want to admit that he didn't have a girlfriend, which was going to be the storyline. It was fine. The current episode was nothing like that. What killed it was not the storyline of Clark wanting to bring

"I'm unhappy with the special effects.

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Paul S. Power

BRYCE: Carlin has been lobbying for Brainiac for awhile, and I've heard no support for doing that. I'd do it in a second. I may do Brainiac on MANTIS.

PAUL: You might do the whole Krypton story there, too.

JEFF: *Let's talk about special effects. Paul, you were brought on board because you understand what makes the character fly.*

PAUL: I think I was brought on because I was a comics fan, both because I worked with John on MY SECRET PROJECT, and he knew I'd like it. He said to me, "You'd know how to make this guy fly." I said, "Sure." It got out here. John gave me a freedom to go up and say, "Hey, **Dean Cain,** try this."

JEFF: *Do you refer specifically to comics in this methodology?*

PAUL: My whole goal in this was for any comics fan since the beginning of SUPERMAN to today to say, "Oooh! Wasn't that a **John Byrne** pose? Isn't that a **Joe Shuster?**" Everybody that's ever drawn Superman has had their signature way of drawing the character flying.

JEFF: *Whose styles would you say you've mimicked in his flying style?*

PAUL: Mainly **Curt Swan,** which isn't really what I wanted to do, but it's the way he did it.

BRYCE: Dean's a much better looking Superman than **Curt Swan** ever did. Apologies to **Curt Swan.**

JEFF: *But you've shown me storyboards that were in the Joe Shuster mode.*

PAUL: I get involved in the actual stunts as well. I'd like to see in the show more of a crossover between what we do green screen, what we do CGI, and more practical flying work that we do with the stunt guys. What it comes down to is that I don't work on the show full-time. I get hired on the day. I don't have a whole lot of time. I have to draw this stuff up fast and get to our practical special effects guys to say, "Do you have this rigging here?" Like the parallelogram, which is a counterbalance weight movement thing. It's like a lopsided seesaw. I can only design for the equipment that we've got. If they'd bring me on a bit longer, like they did with the last episode, I'd be able to draw things and get it to the right department in time so they can order in their equipment. Sometimes you want to do certain things and someone will veto a cherry picker, because we need to get up into a tree and rig something for the practical special effects. I think, if the show lasts longer, hopefully they'll be able to do things like what they did on MIAMI VICE, that they can afford to have all the equipment there. Then we can really make this stuff fly.

JEFF: *What're your feelings on the special effects on this show? Are you*

They haven't lived up to expectations."

happy with it?

PAUL: I think we're getting better. It's like reinventing the wheel. It's not like when STAR WARS was happening in 1976-77 when Universal had their special effects outfit going. When there's a lot of product coming out, there's a lot of experimentation and a lot of stuff stockpiled you can use. The tendency is, we're not doing that sort of film anymore, so they dismantle the stuff. You're all over the place. If this studio had a special effects unit like Disney, you could do it. Now you have to justify the cost. They don't see it as a library: "You'll use that in two months time." It's tough.

BRYCE: I'm unhappy with the special effects. They haven't lived up to expectations. If I had to cite the single thing that comics fans hold our feet to the fire about it's the relative crudity of our special effects compared to what they would expect. I don't mean to say that this is an across-the-board indictment of our special effects department. Some things we do better than others. As Paul said, we're getting better at some things. But I think comics fans have mostly been disappointed at that.

PAUL: Yeah, I've been told as much. I've pitched this, and Deborah's backed me up. I said, "If you hire me full time, I can draw this stuff up so people can price it and put it together." She could see at the back end how it'd make sense. But nobody really pushed for that. I'm not cheap.

JEFF: *I'd agree that I'm not happy with the special effects. It's no slight on you. You're involved in making the guy fly; whether it looks realistic once it's on screen or not isn't up to you. But the reason why they're not better is that nobody thinks it's the main reason people are watching the show.*

PAUL: I think they're trying to save money, too.

BRYCE: My kids have never been disappointed by the special effects. It's all relative. If you look at the **George Reeves** SUPERMAN, it's horrible. If you look at **Kirk Allyn** in the serials, the man would literally jump in the air and become a cartoon. We're talking about the viewing public, because of VCRs and so forth, now watch movie special effects in the confines of their own homes on a TV screen. Therefore, all TV series special effects are measured by a different standard than they used to be. Based on [illegible]t standard, we fall short. I don't know [illegible]nat the answer is. I know they're enor[illegible]nously expensive to do fast and well. [illegible]hey have this shirt in Hollywood that has a triangle on it. It says, "Fast, cheap, and good," one on each corner. It says, "Pick two." I think that's the problem with a show like ours. We have to be fast; we don't have the money so we have to be cheaply; therefore, good is falling by the wayside.

PAUL: I think **John Scheele,** our special effects supervisor, tries to do the best he can, but he's cut thin. He has to be in three places at once. They didn't really have the budget to bring me in earlier. It was a luxury for them to have me. At the beginning, I was on for a few weeks at a time. In this last episode, we had 42 special effects shots. I also drew up stuff for the stunt coordinator as well.

BRYCE: We're thinking of saving money on special effects next year. Paul will draw Dean in the poses. We will shoot those drawings. That will be the show.

PAUL: I think it will get better. I've complained to John. Just let me come in earlier. I can save them money.

BRYCE: Wait till you see the effects on MANTIS. They'll knock you out. Shameless plug.

JEFF: *The movie effects were very good.*

PAUL: I like the actor, too. He looks the part. I keep saying this. If a guy's going to play a superhero, he has to look athletic.

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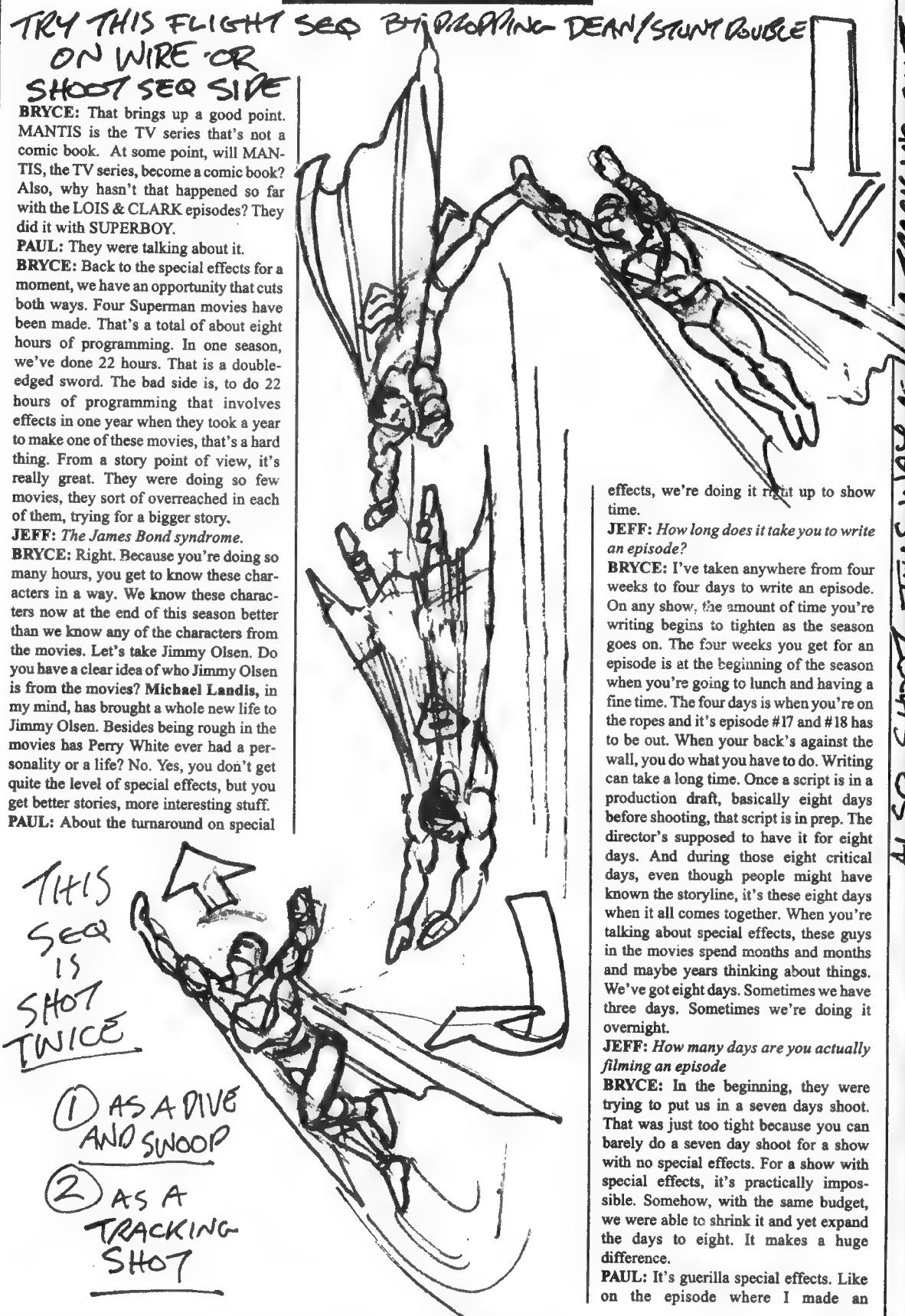
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BRYCE: That brings up a good point. MANTIS is the TV series that's not a comic book. At some point, will MANTIS, the TV series, become a comic book? Also, why hasn't that happened so far with the LOIS & CLARK episodes? They did it with SUPERBOY.

PAUL: They were talking about it.

BRYCE: Back to the special effects for a moment, we have an opportunity that cuts both ways. Four Superman movies have been made. That's a total of about eight hours of programming. In one season, we've done 22 hours. That is a double-edged sword. The bad side is, to do 22 hours of programming that involves effects in one year when they took a year to make one of these movies, that's a hard thing. From a story point of view, it's really great. They were doing so few movies, they sort of overreached in each of them, trying for a bigger story.

JEFF: *The James Bond syndrome.*

BRYCE: Right. Because you're doing so many hours, you get to know these characters in a way. We know these characters now at the end of this season better than we know any of the characters from the movies. Let's take Jimmy Olsen. Do you have a clear idea of who Jimmy Olsen is from the movies? **Michael Landis,** in my mind, has brought a whole new life to Jimmy Olsen. Besides being rough in the movies has Perry White ever had a personality or a life? No. Yes, you don't get quite the level of special effects, but you get better stories, more interesting stuff.

PAUL: About the turnaround on special effects, we're doing it right up to show time.

JEFF: *How long does it take you to write an episode?*

BRYCE: I've taken anywhere from four weeks to four days to write an episode. On any show, the amount of time you're writing begins to tighten as the season goes on. The four weeks you get for an episode is at the beginning of the season when you're going to lunch and having a fine time. The four days is when you're on the ropes and it's episode #17 and #18 has to be out. When your back's against the wall, you do what you have to do. Writing can take a long time. Once a script is in a production draft, basically eight days before shooting, that script is in prep. The director's supposed to have it for eight days. And during those eight critical days, even though people might have known the storyline, it's these eight days when it all comes together. When you're talking about special effects, these guys in the movies spend months and months and maybe years thinking about things. We've got eight days. Sometimes we have three days. Sometimes we're doing it overnight.

JEFF: *How many days are you actually filming an episode*

BRYCE: In the beginning, they were trying to put us in a seven days shoot. That was just too tight because you can barely do a seven day shoot for a show with no special effects. For a show with special effects, it's practically impossible. Somehow, with the same budget, we were able to shrink it and yet expand the days to eight. It makes a huge difference.

PAUL: It's guerilla special effects. Like on the episode where I made an

"Dean Cain is the best Superman ever."

appearance as a bionic boxer —

BRYCE: He ran away with his tail between his legs.

PAUL: — In-between setups, I'd be standing on the sideline drawing stuff for that episode. I wasn't wasting time at all. It was hurry up and wait.

JEFF: *We know you're moving on, Paul. If this show comes back, are you possibly reinvolved?*

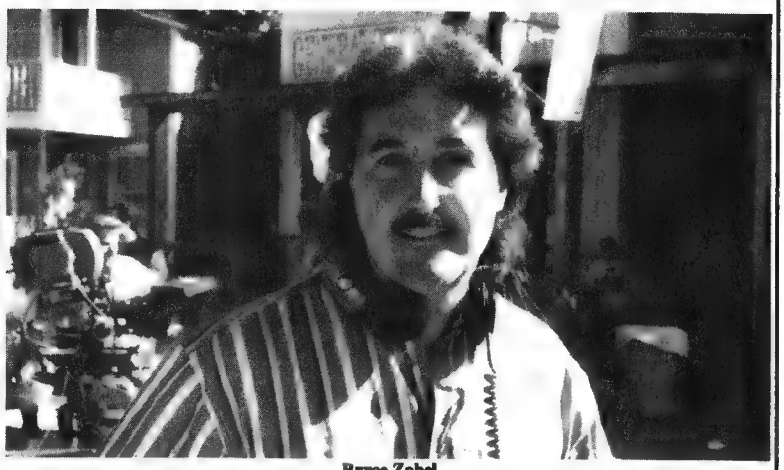
PAUL: Yes.

JEFF: *Bryce, How does it feel turning a childhood love into a way in which you make your living for a year?*

BRYCE: It's been the most delightful experience of my writing career as a writer for episodes. I've not always enjoyed the politics. I've not necessarily felt I've been treated fine by all parties concerned. But my overall feeling about the experience was incredibly positive because I've enjoyed working with the material. It is a childhood dream come true. I can't believe I get paid for this. I've achieved near god-like status with my seven-year-old. I've got more Superman memorabilia than I know what to do with. And I don't intend to be done with Superman. I'd love to do a Superman graphic novel. I'd love, after the second season when all the executive producers have retired to go on to other things, to come back and be on the show in the third season. If they do a new movie, I want to be filming.

PAUL: It was nice to go from BOB to this. It was nice to do two back-to-back comics-related things. I feel that the charm of **Dean Cain** and the chemistry between all the actors, as well as the way Teri plays Lois as so self-obsessed that you're convinced she can't see him as Superman, is masterful. Working on the show's a kick in the pants.

BRYCE: One of the great things I got to do this year is meet all the writers and artists on the Superman comics. I think of **Mike Carlin** as a friend now, and I just knew him as a name before. For my Christmas card this year, my wife and three kids stood in front of the Daily Planet with Superman costumes and shirts. That was our Christmas card. I sent that to all the writers and artists on Superman. I felt I knew all these people. On a personal note, I always felt Superman was my friend. Even when I abandoned Superman for Marvel Comics, I always felt he was a friend. I'd always check back in on him. He was there for me. What's been particularly endearing for me about this experience is that I consider **Dean Cain** my friend. To me, **Dean Cain** is the best Superman I've ever seen. For me to feel like I know him personally has taken that childhood emotion and elevated the adult business-like emotion of going to work every day and being a writer to a new level. For that, I'm very grateful for the whole experience.



Bryce Zabel

PAUL: Dean believes in the character. He's a dream come true. I look at him and say, "You are Superman."

JEFF: *When all is said and done, what do you think this show will add to the Superman mythos?*

BRYCE: I believe Superman will never die. You couldn't kill him in the comics. I believe that as long as there's a popular culture in America, Superman will survive. If you check with the cultural figures that are known world-wide, supposedly there are five of them. I think they're Tarzan, Mickey Mouse, Sherlock Holmes . . . and Superman is one of them. It's well deserved and he's not going away. Where I think this show will rest is, even if this show is cancelled this year, it would be a bright, shining moment and would take its place. Probably in 20 years, there'll be a bright new take on Superman. The thing I think is interesting and that I think has been achieved already and will continue to be achieved by LOIS & CLARK is by going '50s/'90s, having a new/old look. I don't think it'll date as badly as the others. I think you'll be able to watch these episodes 30 years from now and smile in ways that you don't quite smile at the old TV shows.

Ours will be remembered as the first film version of SUPERMAN that made Clark Kent a reasonable human being, someone you'd like to hang out with, a good friend and a cool guy. We made it clear that Clark Kent was the real person and Superman was the secret identity. He put on the costume to go and do certain things he couldn't do as Clark Kent.

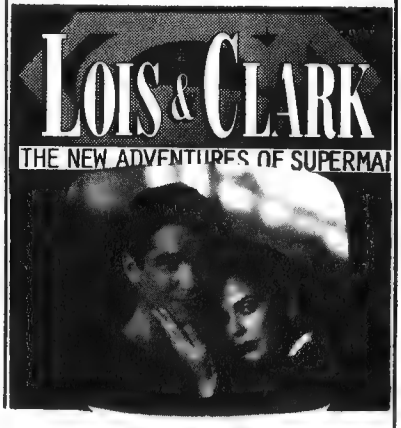
PAUL: This show brought Lois and Clark's human qualities. The show has fortified the legend of Superman, helping to keep it alive for yet another generation of fans.

JEFF: *What was it like as a lifelong comics fan to work on this show?*

BRYCE: At the age of 5 or 6, I bought my first SUPERMAN comic and was enthralled by it. When I got out of grade school, I would run home to watch the TV reruns of SUPERMAN. I stood in line to be one of the first people to see the premiere of the 1979 movie. I stood in line a half-a-block long to get my copy of the Death of Superman.

When I first heard that **Deborah Joy Levine** was going to be writing the pilot for a show about Superman, I thought she was the luckiest person on the planet, getting paid to write about Superman. Now I feel like I'm one of the luckiest guys on the planet. Superman's always been important to me and to have been a part of this show is something I'll take proudly with me all my life.

PAUL: It was a dream come true.



JACK KIRBY
1917 - 1994

"LONG LIVE THE KING!"

JACK KIRBY ARTWORK
IN THE PAGES OF COMICS INTERVIEW

CI #	INTERVIEWEE	ART DESCRIPTION	UNPUB'D	PENCILS	TOTAL
1	Steve Gerber	Destroyer Duck		X	3
2	Mark Evanier	New Gods (cover), Darkseid (FOREVER PEOPLE #3)			2
8	Warren Reece	CAPTAIN AMERICA #1 (cover)			1
9	Jan & Dean Mullaney	Destroyer Duck			1
	Warren Reece	CAPTAIN AMERICA #2 (cover)			1
12	Mister Rogers	Hulk			1
16	Paul Levitz	Darkseid	X	X	1
17	Flo Steinberg	WHAT IF #11, Mighty Marvel Marching Society (Thing)			5
20	Greg Theakston	SUPER POWERS #5		X	1
		SP #5 (cover, etc.)			3
27	Peter B. Gillis	CAPTAIN AMERICA #109			1
36	Bill Black	FUN #3 (cover)			1
38	Steve Gerber	Destroyer Duck (cover)			1
	Larry Hama	CRAZY/Spidey			3
41	Jack Kirby	CI Cover	X		1
		Thor, Popeye, Blue Beetle, Cap, Darkseid, Black Buckaneer, etc.			10
		Surfer, Black Bolt		X	2
43	Jerry Perles	Captain America			2
47	Darrell McNeil	SUPER POWERS #1 (cover)			1
	Tallerday/Marker	Captain Victory			1
48	Hank Rose	Silver Surfer			1
55	Steve Schanes	Captain Victory			1
59	Linda Stanley	Uncropped AMAZING HEROES #47 cover	X		1
64	Stan Lee	Silver Surfer (2), WHAT IF #11, FF (boards)	X(1)	X(1)	4
	Moebius	Silver Surfer/Galactus poster			1
65	Moore/Gibbons	SILVER SURFER #18			1
66	Roy Thomas	MM CONAN (cover)			2
	Ty Templeton	Big Barda (KIRBY UNLEASHED)		X	1
67	Dawn Geiger	Hulk/Thor (TOM #112 cover)			1
68	Roy Thomas	FANTASTIC FOUR, FF (boards)	X(1)	X(1)	2
70	Ron Mann	New Gods			1
73	The Album Shop	X-MEN #1 cover			1
75	Joel Thingvall	TOM #112, AF #15, AS #1, FF & Hulk (paperbacks)			5
77	Motter & Askwith	THE PRISONER (unpublished series)	X		2
78	Steve Rude	MM, AH (cover), letterhead art	X(1)	X(1)	3
	Todd Reis	Batman vs. Captain America	X	X	1
81	Todd McFarlane	Spider-Man, Challengers of the Unknown			2
85	Ted Newsom	Sgt. Fury, Sub-Mariner			2
	John Prentice	Captain America		X	1
	Stan Lee	FF with Mole Man (boards), Silver Surfer (3)	X(1)	X(1)	4
89	Harold Michaelson	FF (boards)	X	X	1
90	"Love/Money"	Darks'd, Hulk/4-Arm, Lord/Light, FF (cov.), MM, FF 64 (cov/unp.)	X(1)	X(5)	7
	Rick Norwood	SKY MASTER (newspaper strip)			1
100	CI Portfolio	Hulk vs. 4-Armed Terror (reprinted from CI #90 — D Hambone art)	X	X	1
103	Dick Ayers	Sporr!			1
104	J. Parizanski	Hulk (tracing), Hulk	X(1)	X(1)	2
105	Les Daniels	FANTASTIC FOUR #52 (unused)	X		1
	S.P. Thompson	Illo, Black Panther	X(1)	X(1)	2
107	"Letterhacks"	Dr. Doom	X	X	1
108	Harry Broertjes	JIMMY OLSEN #133 (rejected)	X(1)	X(1)	2
109	Paul Becton	Inhumans			1
116	Mike Friedrich	Double-page spread (21 figures)			21
119	Todd McFarlane	SATAN'S SIX (cover)			1
	Rob Liefeld	PHANTOM FORCE (cover)			1
120	Gary Jackson	Superman (pencils)		X	1
121	"Up Front"	Black Bolt/David Anthony Kraft combo		X	1
	Jack Kirby	Watcher, Street Code, CA (3), PForce, Secret City(3), FF (boards)			
		Devil Dinosaur	X(7)	X(11)	12
	Chic Stone	FF,Thor, "recreation" collage	X		1
	Mike Royer	Orion, Thor, Kamandi, New Gods, LORD OF LIGHT	X(2)	X(2)	5
	Tony Salmons	FF, Thor (2), CA, Speedboy	X(4)	X(5)	5
	Wm. Stout	Monsters, Thor, FF, Demon, Fury	X(5)	X(4)	5
	Steve Rude	MM #10 (pencils, inks, finishes), Orion/Darks. CA, Fury (ST #141)	X(5)	X(3)	6
122	Mike Royer	Satan's Six, IN THE DAYS OF THE MOB	X(1)		2
123	Margot Kidder	Superman (unknown inker)	X		1
129	Frank Miller	The Demon (spread)	X	X	1
	Todd McFarlane	THOR #147	X	X	1
130	Dan Thorsland	New Gods: Orion/Darkseid			1
131	John Kricfalusi	FANTASTIC FOUR #181 (cover)	X	X	1

"I had already heard our logo looked like 'Up

JEFF ROVIN

He's written and edited comics at Warren, Atlas and Skywald, written Hollywood scandal books and biographies, scripted TV shows, and done encyclopedias of super-heroes, super-villains and animated cartoons. Jeff Rovin is his name, and he's got fascinating tales to tell. So that's just what we're having him do!

In Part One, Jeff told of his early career in comics, and of the people he worked for, at Warren, Skywald and elsewhere. In this installment, we pick it up with Rovin's career as an editor and writer at Atlas (where he did PHOENIX, among others) and his later career as writer of the "Babylon" books about TV, country music and sports, his association with people such has Adam West and Delta Burke, and more than a few Secrets Behind the Comics . . .

LOU MOUGIN: *Now, we haven't even gotten into your Atlas career. Tell me about Atlas and how you got involved with that?*

JEFF ROVIN: Well, **Martin Goodman** had sold Marvel Comics to Cadence Publishing, with the provision that Chip was going to be kept in charge, his son **Chip Goodman.** And not long after he sold it Chip got fired. Not surprisingly, Chip was not the greatest publisher. Sweet guy but he was not his father. His father was an old-time pulp magazine publisher and knew the ropes. He was a real spark plug. So, in May of '74 he called me up — he called up a bunch of people who were working in comics — to ask if I wanted to work for a new company. He had hired **Larry Leiber** first, to edit the color comics, and he wanted me to do the black-and-whites. So, the chance to create something new, it was very tempting. There were a lot of artists that I liked but **Warren** hated, like

Pat Boyette and others whose work I thought was great, and so the chance to use more of them was very tempting to me. And to use people who had been alienated by **Warren.**

LOU: *I'm sure.*

JEFF: So, that started in the end of June of 1974. Now, Larry was also a very sweet guy, but **Stan Lee's** brother, living in his shadow, terrified of doing something that was not great, you know . . . it was like he had an image to live up to.

LOU: *The Stan Lee image.*

JEFF: Yeah. It would be like **Joe DeMille** doing movie spectacles, it's just not possible. So, what happened was he

WULF, GRIM GHOST, THE SCORPION, TARGITT, IRON JAW, TARANTULA, PHOENIX, PLANET OF VAMPIRES, THE DESTRUCTOR, MORLOCK 2001, THE BRUTE, DEMON HUNTER, SON OF DRACULA, TIGER-MAN ©1974 Atlas Comics

Across the pages: Various cover art from the short-lived Atlas Comics by (left to right) Ernie Colón, Howard Chaykin, Larry

yours.' *(Laughter.)* It was an 'A' with an arrow."

started by doing TALES OF THE EAGLE, which was a color comic, a Western title. Then he wanted to do a superhero title and he came up with DESTRUCTOR, but I think it was **Archie Goodwin** who came up with the concept. I felt it would be really neat to team **Ditko** and **Wood.** At the time **Ditko** didn't want to ink himself . . . well, I don't remember exactly how that played out. But, they both came in and I was like, "Yeah, let's get them!" *(Laughter.)* "I don't care what it costs, it's going to be a great book!"

LOU: *And it was!*

JEFF: It was, it was. But the first people I went to were DC artists because I thought it would be bad form to raid Marvel. Martin had come from Marvel and it would just look like a vendetta.

LOU: *Too vampiric.*

JEFF: That's a good word. I had already heard that our logo looked like "up yours." (Laughter.) It was an "A" with an arrow! So, I was starting to hear these things, I was thinking we'd better just look at DC people. So, I had **Mike Sekowsky** do IRON JAW. And we had new people, **Pat Broderick** —

LOU: *You had Bernie Wrightson,*

Across the top: Artwork by Pat Broderick (WULF), Mike Sekowsky (IRON JAW #1 splash), Neal Adams (IRON JAW #1 cover).

Lieber, Neal Adams, Rich Buckler, Sal Amendola, Larry Hama, Pat Broderick with Neal Adams, Larry Lieber again, Al Milgrom inked by Dick Giordano, and Pablos Marcos.

ATLAS COMICS
ATLAS COMICS
DOOMSDAY MINUS ONE!
THE BRUTE!
YOU ARE NO MATCH FOR THE BRUTE!
NO ONE CAN WITHSTAND THE CRUSHING GAZE OF DOOMSTRIKER!

BLOODWING ©1985 Astral Comics & Richard Buckler / DEVIL SLAYER, DEFENDERS & DEATHLOK ©1994 Marvel Entertainment Group. CREEPY ©1974-75 James Warren.

"I went after THE AVENGER and the next day DC

Howard Chaykin —

JEFF: Right, we had **Chaykin.** Bernie . . . he may have done some inking for Larry, yeah. You know, we had **Neal Adams, Dick Giordano, Frank Thorne —**

LOU: *And David Anthony Kraft — we know you're there, DAK!*

JEFF: Yes, but he came a little bit later. So, first we were going to do five color comic books; I had agreed to do two and Larry was going to do three. But then Martin realized that in order to get rack space, because Marvel had started publishing more titles, he realized in order to get more rack space we'd have to publish more titles, too. We didn't have any reprints then, so I said, "Let's go after the Tower comics. There's reprint stuff and it would be gangbusters!"

LOU: *Right.*

JEFF: So he agreed. But what did he do? He did TIPPY TEEN, which we did as VICKY. *(Laughter.)* "No, no, those aren't the ones that I wanted!"

LOU: *Wrong ones.*

JEFF: But he didn't like T.H.U.N.-D.E.R. AGENTS; he thought they were very static and uninteresting. I should have seen the writing on the wall then, but I didn't. Anyway, so we ended up doing about 20 titles, of which Larry was still doing his original three plus TIPPY TEEN. I got the rest. Well, I had **Ric Meyers,** who was a college kid — he just came in off the street and he had ambition and some good ideas. He was a real mystery buff. He wrote a story that **Alex Toth** thought was the best comic story that he'd ever illustrated.

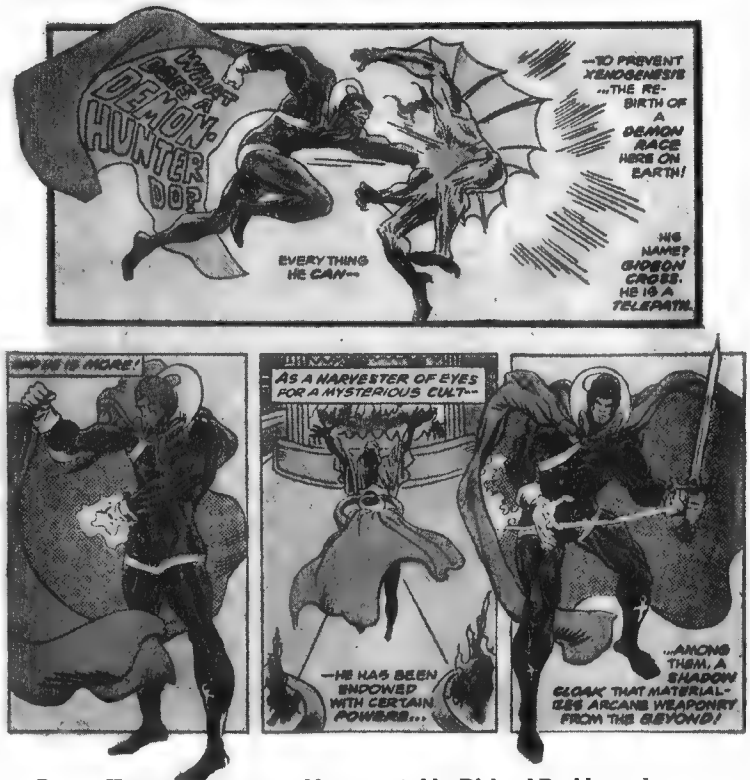
LOU: *Which one?*

JEFF: It was "A Job Well Done." So, we had **Chaykin** and **Larry Hama** and **Al Milgrom** and **Mike Fleisher,** and it was just terrific.

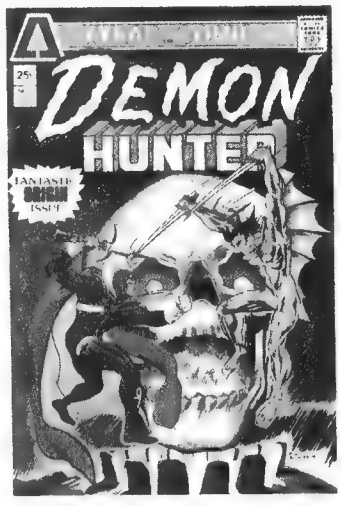
LOU: *SCORPION stands out in my mind, the two Chaykin did.*

JEFF: Right.

LOU: *Kind of your DOMINIC FORTUNE, possibly forerunner for AMERICAN FLAGG!*


WHAT DOES A DEMON HUNTER DO?
—TO PREVENT XENOGENESIS —THE RE-BIRTH OF A DEMON RACE HERE ON EARTH!
EVERY THING HE CAN—
HIS NAME? GIDEON CROSS. HE IS A TELEPATH.
AND HE IS MORE!
AS A HARVESTER OF EYES FOR A MYSTERIOUS CULT—
—HE HAS BEEN ENDOWED WITH CERTAIN POWERS...
...AMONG THEM, A SHADOW CLOAK THAT MATERIALIZES ARCANE WEAPONRY FROM THE BEYOND!

Demon Hunter, a supernatural hero created by Richard Buckler and our own David Anthony Kraft. The hero that would not die . . .



. . . going on from Atlas to Galaxia (BLOODWING) and Marvel (DEVIL SLAYER).

is doing JUSTICE, INC. Carmine was vindictive."

JEFF: Oh, it was — not possibly, definitely! And I had gone after I AM LEGEND; we were close to signing a deal to do that as a comic book.

LOU: *Kind of like your PLANET OF VAMPIRES concept, right?*

JEFF: Well, that's what happened; Martin didn't want to pay the money for it. **Charlton Heston** had even sent us some notes that he had made throughout the making of THE OMEGA MAN, which was based on that, because he thought that we could use some of his ideas. We contacted Toho to do GODZILLA and RODAN. **Walt Simonson** had actually drawn GORGO VERSUS RODAN; they fought from New York to Washington trampling everything! *(Laughter.)* It was the best story we ever did and it never was published. But then Marvel swooped in and got the rights to do GODZILLA.

LOU: *After they had heard you were going for it?*

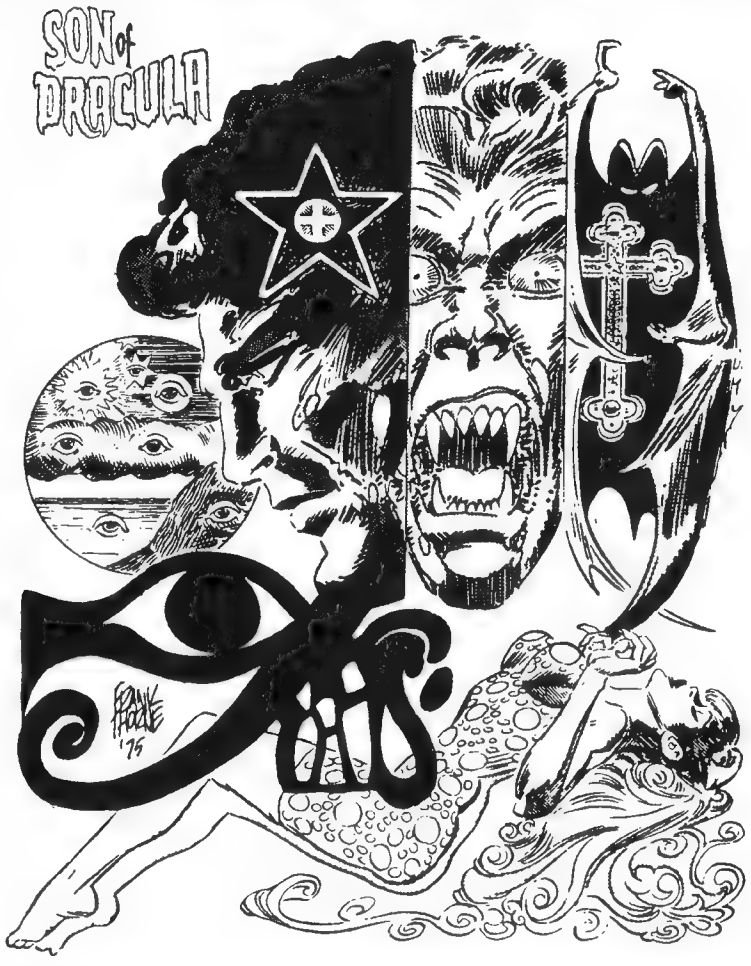
JEFF: That's what started to happen. People would hear that we were doing something then they would get it. I went after THE AVENGER and the next day DC is doing JUSTICE, INC. Carmine really was vindictive about that, and understandably, mind you; we were taking his people. And we were offering royalties, which no one else was doing. So he retaliated by scooping up properties which we were going after, and by offering to return artwork and pay royalties. I have the date of our first contract, the date of his memo, so I can prove without a doubt that Atlas was the first to give royalties. We weren't around long enough to pay them, but our hearts were in the right place.

LOU: *Right.*

JEFF: All right, so the first wave of books came out and Martin was furious. He hated them. He hated them with a passion. They didn't look like anything that he knew. He didn't like **Frank Thorne's** work, for example, even though Frank did some incredible stuff. He hated **Ernie Colon's** work. And he hated **Pat Boyette's** TARANTULA. When I told him we were doing TARANTULA he figured it would be SPIDER-MAN. He didn't know we were going to have a spider that ate people. *(Laughter.)* We really wanted to do tough —

LOU: *What would be called gritty later.*

JEFF: What would be called gritty. But what we wanted to do was DEATHWISH type comics. Tiger Man, he was the first one, really, with those claws that rip people to pieces.



Frank Thorne, who was not one of publisher Martin Goodman's favorites, drew this never-published cover.

LOU: *He killed people?*

JEFF: He killed people. I just felt that the time was right, people were in the mood for vigilante type comics.

LOU: *You guys should have considered getting THE SPIDER, the ultimate vigilante concept.*

JEFF: We did. We went through all of the pulp characters. Unfortunately, I don't remember who owned the rights, but they'd gone out of business and we couldn't find them. It was just Ric and myself, and then **Steve Mitchell** came from DC to do the art chores — and Martin hated him, too. He didn't want DC or something similar to it. So, the edict came down around December of '74, only hire Marvel people and make the books look like Marvel. So, my feeling was, you know, I can leave or we can try it. I decided to leave.

But then Chip called me and said, "Just try it, see what happens." So, you know, he wanted to do a title like THE HULK, so we did THE BRUTE. We started doing really stupid, stupid books. He changed THE PHOENIX, which I really liked, into a superhero comic. So, all of a sudden **Frank Giacoia** and other people from Marvel were drawing our books. **Steve Ditko** had done a beautiful story for THRILLING ADVENTURE STORIES called "WRECAGE" and it never got published. Well, he never finished it; he gave up in disgust. He had come up with a beautiful concept — WRECAGE, was an acronym, I don't remember what it meant —

LOU: *W-R-E-C-K-A-G-E?*

JEFF: No, it was W-R-E-C-A-G-E. He couldn't think of a way to use the K. *(Laughter.)* He came in one day and just tore the stuff up and stormed out.

"Jim War n — When I started doing black-and-

A unique interpretation of the Id creature from the film FORBIDDEN PLANET (1956) by Walt Simonson. A remake is in the works.

Howard Nostrand did TARGET. We thought that was the most interesting book. Howard was **Neal Adams'** teacher, mentor, whatever, and he was doing a real **Will Eisner** type strip but with violence. I remember this one panel, he put a gun up to this guy's head, the next panel is the same view only a cloud of smoke and a "BLAM!" The head was gone.

LOU: *I think I ought to point out that when he was talking about the guy Jeff was pointing at his nose.*

JEFF: Yeah, that was great; it was no holds barred. We did THE COUGAR, the stunt man who became a hero. We wanted to do NIGHT STALKER at that time but we couldn't get the rights to it. Then Martin said he wanted a kung fu guy, so we had to do HANDS OF THE DRAGON. You know, it's like any veneer of originality that we had, any foundation that was new or different, he just kicked it away. Then Marvel's lawyers got into the act, trying to stop him from publishing because he had signed this noncompetitor agreement and here he was publishing comic books. They were threatening to sue the company and Martin realized he might not have a leg to stand on, so he started to get a little bit nervous about that. Then he bought SWANK for Chip, which was really a poor man's PLAYBOY, and SWANK pretty much became Chip's sole interest. He lost all interest in the comic books. Then . . . I forget. I don't remember what the final incident was that made me leave. But I had compromised the titles much too much by that point. I finally decided to go. At that time I think DAK came in to work with Larry, and Larry took over all the titles. Everything was revamped and changed — I don't think for the better.

LOU: *The only thing I remember Dave doing was DEMON HUNTER, which was a pretty good little title. Well, one issue.*

JEFF: Yeah, exactly.

LOU: *There are two things before we get off Atlas that I want to check into. Were there legal problems from Marvel because, of course, in the '50s they were known as Atlas? The other thing was I kind of got intimations from a Stan Lee interview that this kind of opened a rift between him and Larry. Any information*

TIGER-MAN #3 by writer Gerry Conway, penciller Steve Ditko, and inker Al Milgrom.

whites in competition, oh, livid does not *begin!*"

THE DESTRUCTOR #1, written by Archie Goodwin with art by Steve Ditko, pencils, and Wally Wood, inks.

on this?

JEFF: Yeah. The Atlas title, he checked it pretty carefully and that was really in the clear. I'm not sure whether Marvel would have made an issue of it, but I'm sure they would have thrown that into the mix if they had decided to sue, the likelihood of confusion or whatever. But I know that wasn't a concern. There really wasn't a rift between Stan and Larry, that I recall.

Stan and I met a couple of times to discuss this, because I really didn't want to upset him. I felt, in deference to all he had done — and here we are, upstarts, you know; particularly me — I didn't want to upset him. So I talked to him a few times just to make sure that we were behaving in a way that I thought was dignified in approaching his talent. He was more than generous — more generous than **Jim Warren** would have been. *(Laughter.)* Or than **Jim Warren** *was,* in fact. When I started doing black-and-whites in competition with him, oh, he was . . . livid does not even *begin.* He was *nuclear!* He went *berserk.* He came over to me at a convention and told me to get the hell out. *(Laughter.)* It wasn't a convention; what the hell was it? Oh, at a comic book meeting, the fledgling comic book union, that's what it was. Neal's group.

LOU: *Lasted almost as long as GREEN LANTERN/GREEN ARROW.*

JEFF: That's right, it did. But it was well-intentioned. But, you know, Martin was related to Stan. This was his cousin.

LOU: *Yeah, or cousin-in-law or something.*

JEFF: So, that made it a little bit uncomfortable for Martin and Stan. They were kind of dancing around each other, Stan more than Martin. Martin was just perpetually pissed and really just wanted to get back at Marvel and Cadence.

LOU: *So, when the big ax fell at Atlas you went back to work for Warren?*

JEFF: I did, yeah. About a couple of months passed, and I didn't go back to work full-time. When I quit Atlas, which was in January of '75, I became a free-lancer — which I remain to this day. I went back to **Warren** because Jim and I had really had a good relationship. I went up there and said, "I'm sorry that you

MORLOCK 2001 #3 by writer Gary Friedrich, penciller Steve Ditko and inker Berni Wrightson.

UNTIL, ALL WITHIN A MATTER OF SECONDS, WHAT WAS A MAN IS NOW A MONSTROUS MASS OF LIVING VEGETATION THAT POSSESSES NO MIND, ONLY THE PLANT-LIKE WILL TO SURVIVE...

"I started writing for LADIES HOME JOURNAL in 1978."

One of Wrightson's early pieces for Warren's CREEPY b&w magazine.

WELCOME, CREEPY CONNOISSEURS MY PUTRID PORTRAIT IS ONLY THE FIRST WEIRD WORK EXHIBITED IN OUR LITTLE GALLERY OF THE GHOULISH...!
WITHIN IS... ALL MANNER OF THINGS! FROM POE'S SUBTLE TERROR TO THE SHEER HORROR OF A MODERN DAY DEMON! ALL JUST WAITING... FOR YOU!

were upset that I competed with you but, Jim, you would have done the same thing." And he admitted that was true, but "Don't ever do it again!" *(Laughter.)* So I came back and I was working on FM, writing articles and doing "Graveyard Examiner" and whatnot, and writing stories for CREEPY. And bird-dogging, finding new products for Captain Company. Just kind of working in general freelance capacities.

LOU: *Was this about when you started getting into your pop culture book writing?*

JEFF: Well, actually, I started doing books while I was still at Atlas. My PICTORIAL HISTORY OF SCIENCE FICTION FILMS came out in '75. It was — once again just by luck, not by genius — it was really the only picture book of science fiction that was out when STAR WARS came out, so it kind of rode that wave.

LOU: *Incredible timing there.*

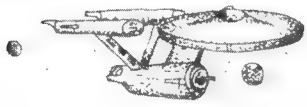
JEFF: It was, it was. Certainly underscored for me the importance of timing. Then I did this series of novels right after that, called HOLLYWOOD DETECTIVE, and once again I lucked out. It was set in the '30s, then CHINATOWN came out, so we really managed to cash in on that, too. So, I did novels and nonfiction, whatever was interesting.

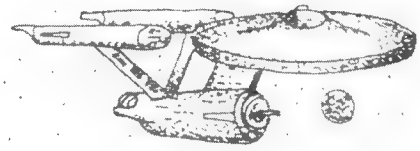
LOU: *Okay, say like in researching a book such as TV BABYLON, to what extent do you actually go down there, or phone, and interview these people yourself? How much do you rely on already published stuff?*

JEFF: All of the above. With the material that's already been published you have to check it, obviously, because you don't know what agenda or baggage another reporter brought to something. I started writing for LADIES' HOME JOURNAL in 1978, and I do about five or six interviews for them a year, and I was also doing the OMNI film column which Ben Bova and I turned into an interview column — so, I was interviewing tons of people.

Whenever I would interview them I would ask them all kinds of questions just in case I could ever use it, like: What's your favorite joke? (Laughter.) So, TV BABYLON really grew out of a lot of different TV interviews that I did. And I

ADULT COSTUMES





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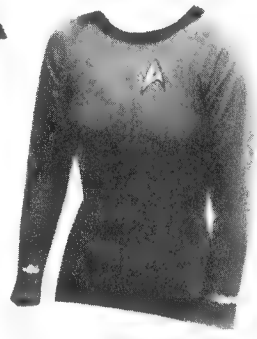

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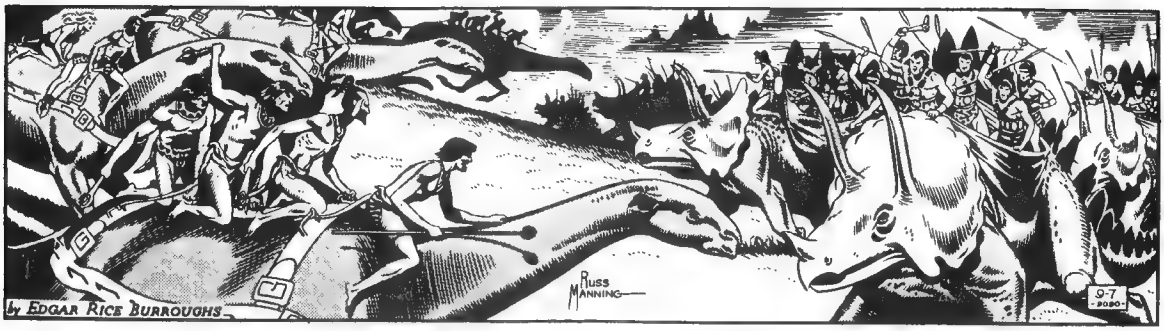

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
drawn by ROMERO
A MISSILE FROM NOWHERE DROPS ANOTHER OF KOCH'S MEN
I SAW THE PRINCESS CLOBBER TWO— THAT LEAVES ONLY KOCH AND ONE MORE
WHAT THE DEVIL HAPPENED TO THEM?
IT... IT MUST HAVE BEEN SOMETHING HORRIBLE, BOSS— JUDGING BY THAT SCREAM WE HEARD
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"I dug up information from lawyers — lawyers are gossipy."

had worked for **Mark Goodson** writing questions for one of his game shows — again, freelance — so, you know, you start to make contacts and hear stories. I'm an expert witness in a lot of lawsuits involving science fiction.

LOU: *Oh?*

JEFF: When **George Lucas** sued BATTLESTAR GALACTICA for copyright infringement on STAR WARS, I worked with BATTLESTAR GALACTICA. When **Spielberg** was sued for E.T. I worked for them. And then THE GREATEST AMERICAN HERO was sued by DC, and then by another guy who had created a superhero. *(Laughter.)* That was really fascinating work, and again that really strengthened the Hollywood connections. I was able to dig up information from lawyers — lawyers are the most gossipy people there are.

LOU: *We learn tricks of the trade right here, folks!*

JEFF: That's it, yeah. Make friends with lawyers and no secret will be unavailable to you.

LOU: *Okay, COUNTRY MUSIC BABYLON, the one of yours I've just most recently finished. I know this is going to sound awfully Hedda Hopper or something, but did you actually do phone interviews with some of these people, like the Judds or Hank Jr.?*

JEFF: Yeah. Some I actually went and met. **Billy Ray Cyrus** I did for LADIES' HOME JOURNAL, and that was really the genesis of this. I had always wanted to write about **Johnny Horton,** who was one of my favorite singers. Then I interviewed Billy Ray and spent some time with him, and it occurred to me, "Hey, let's just do a whole book about these people!" *(Laughter.)* So, we did it pretty quickly, because obviously country music was hot. And I had known Dolly from RHINESTONE, because one of my lawyer friends represented Stallone at the time so I got to meet them. You know, you keep those contacts going, and I was able to do the CLIFFHANGER novelization because **Stallone** had known my stuff. You never know how these things are going to develop.

LOU: *What was the great inspiration for doing ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SUPERHEROES? Publisher call you up wanting something about comics?*

JEFF: No, that was my idea because I wanted to have all of the information in one place.

LOU: *Yeah!*

JEFF: I was tired of going through the comic books —

LOU: *Trying to figure out where the origin came from, right.*

JEFF: Or what the origin was!

LOU: *Or if there was one.*

JEFF: Yeah. The real problem with that, as you know, is getting your hands on the comic books.

LOU: *Or getting the rights to reproduce those.*

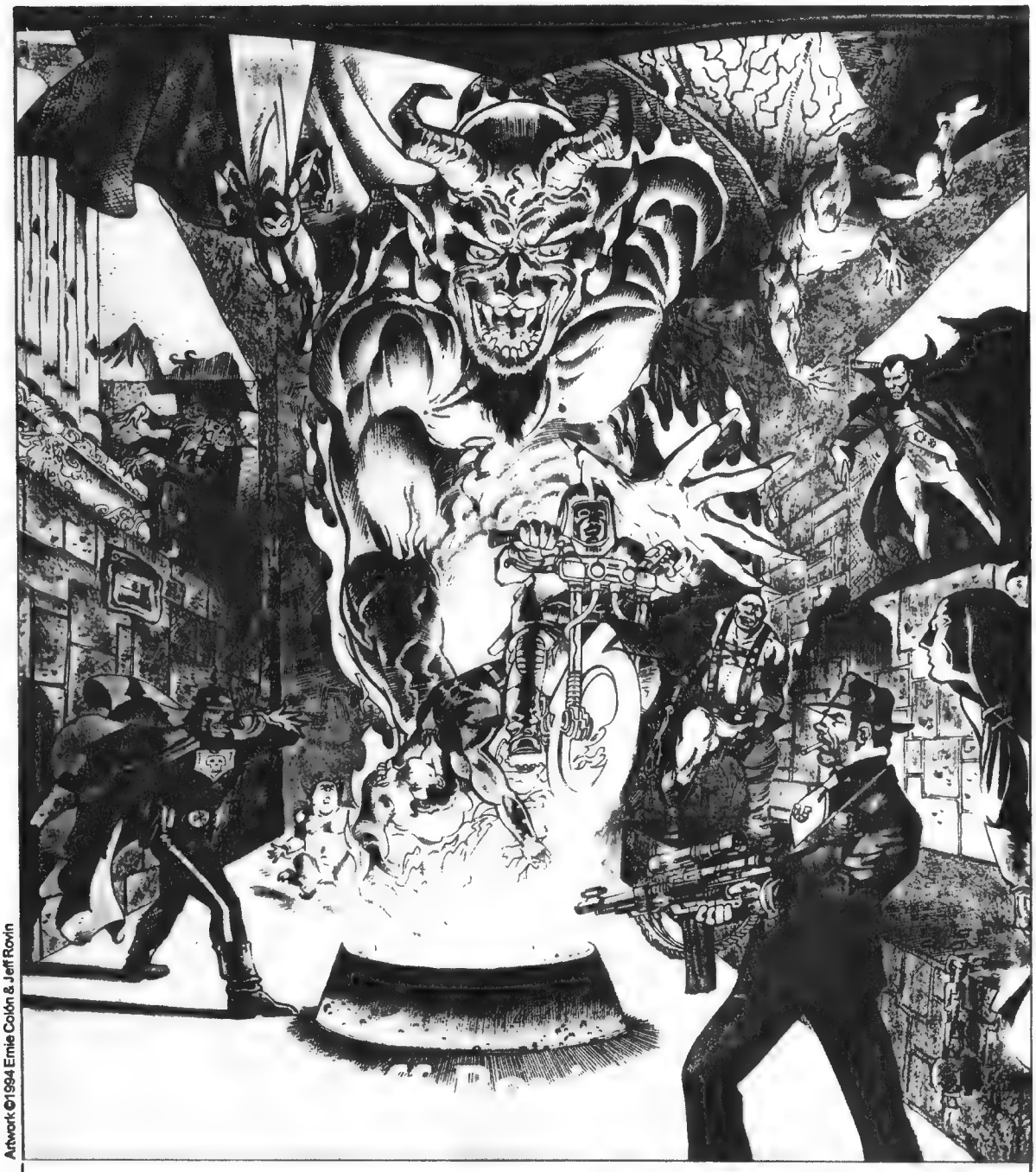
JEFF: Exactly, exactly. People complain that I didn't have enough of one publisher. Well, you know, when they want $1,000 an illustration it's tough. So, now I'm doing the fifth one, which is ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ADVENTURE HEROES.

LOU: What were the ones in the series after SUPERHEROES?

JEFF: SUPER-VILLAINS, MON-

Full pencils and inks by Berni Wrightson.

"I did the Nintendo books, telling you to win the games."



Artwork ©1994 Ernie Colón & Jeff Rovin

Cover detail from Jeff's ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SUPER VILLAINS. Painting is by Ernie Colón.

STERS, then CARTOON ANIMALS. There was a whole bunch of those. And I did all of the Nintendo books, which again were good timing, I suppose, because nobody else was telling you to win the games.

LOU: *And, of course, you've got the Adam West biography coming up.*

JEFF: Well, I had known Adam for many many years. In the late '70s I had talked to him for OMNI, when SUPERMAN was first coming out, and we stayed in touch. And I just felt that now the time was right, that we would be able to sell it, after **Barry Williams** made a big hit with his BRADY BUNCH memoirs. Seems kind of odd that that should trigger it, after all the Bat hype for years before! But I think also that enough time had passed that Adam could look more objectively at those years, and I think readers are going to be surprised to find that he didn't just go in and wing it. I think they will be really impressed by the work that went into it, and how amazing it really was.

LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

SUPERMAN II SCRIPT SOUGHT

Dear DAK,

In the interview with **Margot Kidder** in issue #123, **Ms. Kidder** speaks about the "real," original screenplay for SUPERMAN II and even offered to send the interviewer a copy. I have been looking for *years* for a copy of this script (the **Richard Donner** version) and would *love* to get a copy of it. Could you tell me how I could go about getting one? Or give me **Ms. Kidder's** mailing address so I can write and ask her? None of the movie script dealers I've spoken to have it.

I love the magazine. Keep up the good work!

David Nesbitt
1612 East 3rd St.
Brooklyn, NY 11230

As I'm sure you can appreciate, Dan, we're honor-bound not to make the addresses of interviewees public — but I'm going to do the next best thing, by throwing your request open to the entire vast readership of COMICS INTERVIEW (hey, you never know who's *out there!). If anyone can help Dan in his "quest" for SUPERMAN — THE REAL SCRIPT, please contact him directly.*

— DAK

JUST DUCKY

Dear DAK,

I've been getting some oddball work from Gladstone lately — the credit reads "American script by," which is pretty much what I'm doing. I take these European stories that are written in English, apparently by people who aren't all that good at English, and I rewrite them in American. My basic guideline is to do *anything* to make it better, so I'm not worrying too much about sticking to the sense of the original. I throw in topical American references, do running gags in the dialog . . . once, I added an entire subplot!

I wonder how much credit the readers give me for stuff like this. I mean, somebody else gets listed as having written the story. Anybody who didn't see the script I started with would have *no idea* how different it is when I turn it in than when I got it.

Whenever I get a chance — and sometimes when I have to *manufacture* the chance — I like to throw in Carl Barks references, like changing a nasty guy the Ducks ran into on an island from a European baron to an ousted Brutopian commissar. Another time, they were climbing a cliff, whining for a whole page about how much they *didn't* want to be climbing that cliff. *Booo-ring!* I figured that was a good place for Scrooge to tell the others about his experiences selling oddball things in obscure places, so the nephews could suggest they float to the top on his hot air. Like I say, I don't know how much credit I get for Barks-like stuff I throw in; for all the reader knows, I just paraphrased something the original writer did.

One thing I do might draw a little bit of attention. I use my middle initial in the credits. Sooner or later, *somebody* is going to make the connection . . . "Hey, does that 'D' in his name stand for 'Duck'?"

Oh well. At least I'm having fun with it. *And* getting paid — a one-two combination you just can't beat!

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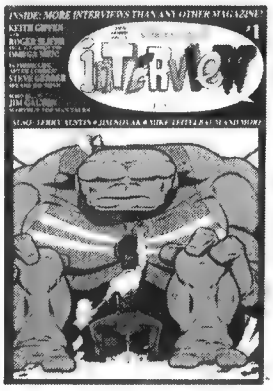
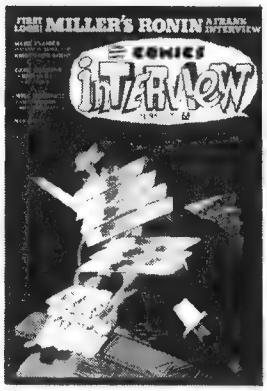
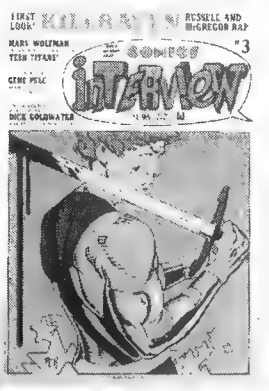


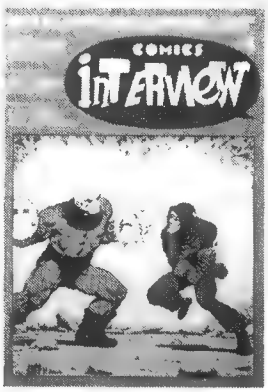
#1-$5.00 **Keith Giffen** on the making of THE OMEGA MEN — **Steve Gerber** speaks out on comics — X-MEN inker **Terry Austin** talks — Marvel's top man, **Jim Galton, tells all** — and much more in this premiere issue!



#2-$5.00 **Miller** raps about RONIN — **Mark Evanier** shares secrets of **Kirby's** NEW GODS — **Steve Gerber** asks **Will Meugniot** about DNAGENTS — **Gene Simmons** of KISS on comics — more! Cover by **Frank Miller.**

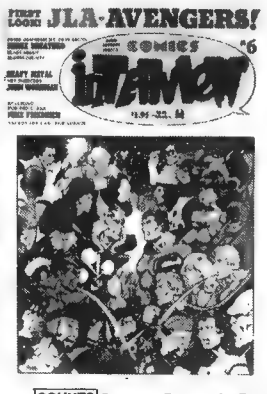


#3 COUNTS AS FIVE **Don McGregor & Craig Russell** on KILLRAVEN — Origins of NEW TEEN TITANS told by **Marv Wolfman** — **Howard Chaykin** on AMERICAN FLAGG — French comics by **Neal Adams** — Cover by **Russell.**

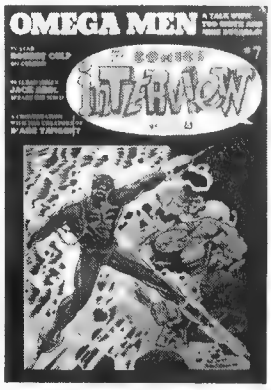


#4 COUNTS AS FIVE **Starlin** speaks about **WARLOCK, CAPTAIN MARVEL & DREADSTAR — DC's Dick Giordano**, part 1 — from **Foster** to **Frazetta**, the last **Roy G. Krenkel** interview — Cover by **Starlin.**

#5-$5.00 **Wendy & Richard Pini** — inside ELFQUEST, part 1 — **Stan Lee**, straight from the shoulder — DC's **Dick Giordano** part 2 — Origins of COMICO. Cover by **Wendy Pini.**



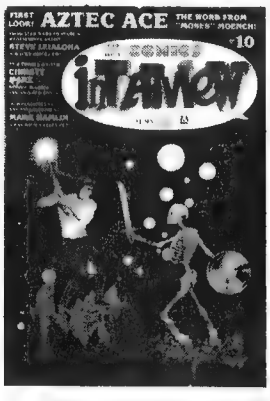
#6 COUNTS AS 3 **George Perez & Roy Thomas** tell all about JLA/AVENGERS feud — inside ELFQUEST, part 2 — **Berke Breathed** blabs about BLOOM COUNTY — more! Awesome cover by **Perez!**



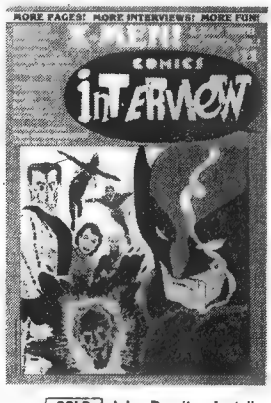
#7-$5.00 Artist **Tod Smith** — inker **Mike DeCarlo**, too — D'ARC TANGENT — TV star **Robert Culp** talks about comics — Marvel artist **Jack Abel** OMEGA MEN cover by **Smith & DeCarlo!**

#8-$5.00 **Mike Baron** and **Steve Grant** discuss NEXUS, WHISPER and BADGER — **Bill Griffith** talks about ZIPPY THE PINHEAD — **Richard Burton** on British comics — plus more! Cover by **Steve Rude.**

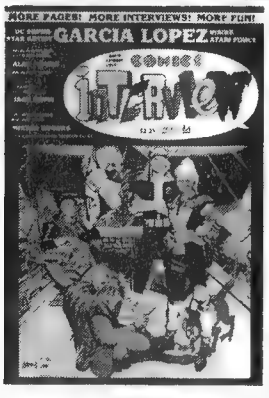
#9 COUNTS AS FIVE GOD-SIZE ISSUE **Walt Simonson**, the man and his art — grand master **Joe Kubert** gabs — A walk down memory lane with comics giant **Gardner Fox** — much, much more!! THOR cover by **Simonson.**



#10-$5.00 **Doug Moench** on his SF series — from **Starlin** to STAR WARS, a wacky interview with **Steve Leialoha** — **Christy Marx** on women, sex and RED SONJA — more! ACE cover by **Hernandez & Yeates.**



#11 SOLD OUT **John Romita, Jr.** talks about Marvel from IRON MAN to X-MEN — **Doug Moench** (part two) on his stormy career and the state of comics — inside Pacific Comics — more! X-MEN cover by **Romita!**



#12-$5.00 DC artist **Jose Luis Garcia Lopez** (TEEN TITANS, ATARI FORCE) — EC artist **Jack Davis** — TV's **Mr. Rogers** — star scripter **Alan Moore** talks about superheroes — **Louise Simonson** — more!

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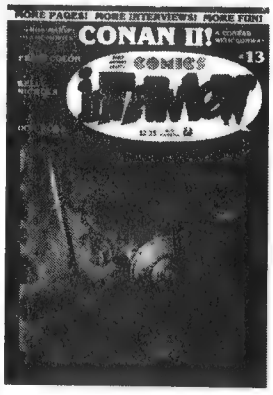
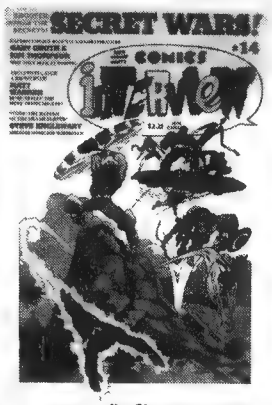
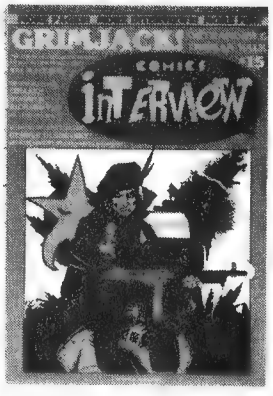


#13 $5.00 **Gerry Conway & Roy Thomas** sound off on scripting movies (Conan, Fire & Ice) and comics — a two-fisted talk with outspoken artist **Ernie Colon** — porn star **Kelly Nichols** — **Don Rosa** — more!



#14 $5.00 **Jim Shooter** talks about SECRET WARS! **Gary Groth** of COMICS JOURNAL! Scripter **Steve Englehart** sounds off on SILVER SURFER and other surprises! SECRET WARS cover by **Mike Zeck**!



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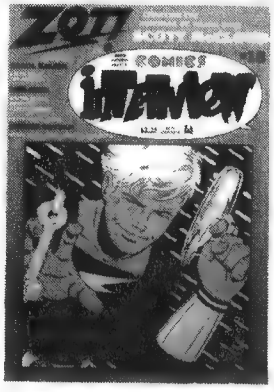

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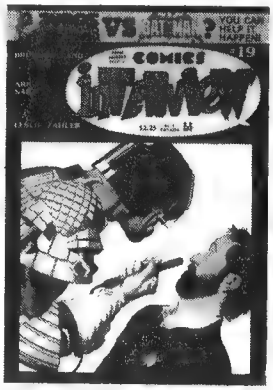

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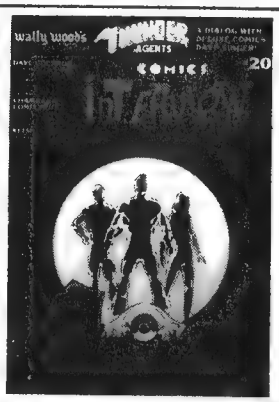

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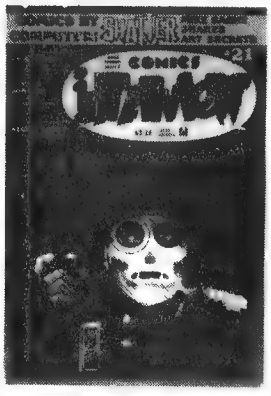

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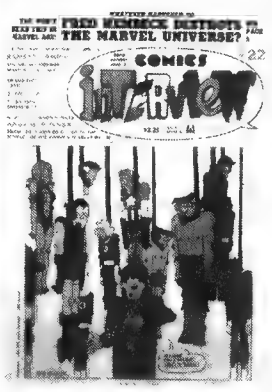

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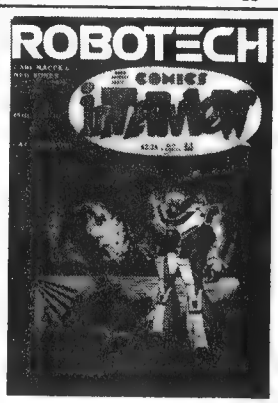

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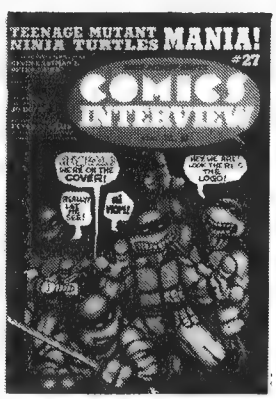

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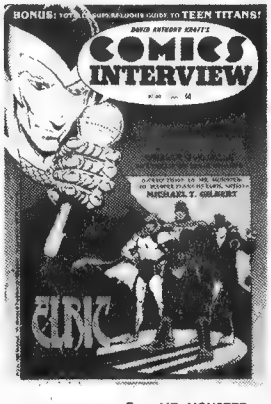

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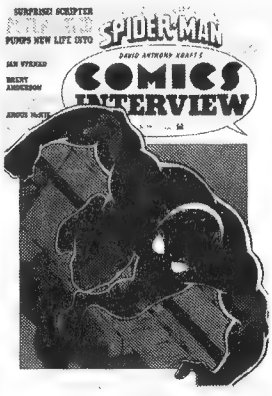

#30-$5.00 Marvel's **Peter David** on SPIDER-MAN—**Jan Strnad** on DALGODA—British HEAVY METAL artist **Angus McKie—Brent Anderson** tells why he turned down X-MEN!

#31 COUNTS AS 3 **Frank Miller's** DARK KNIGHT—creators of the Original Batman: **Kane, Finger, Robinson, Rousos** having conflicting memories—TV's Robin, **Burt Ward—Miller** DARK KNIGHT cover!

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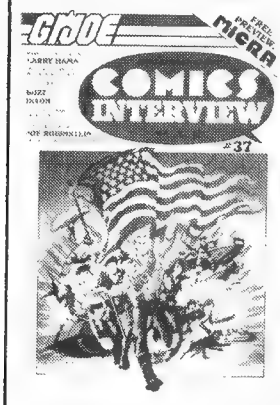

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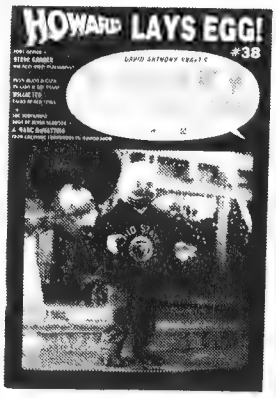

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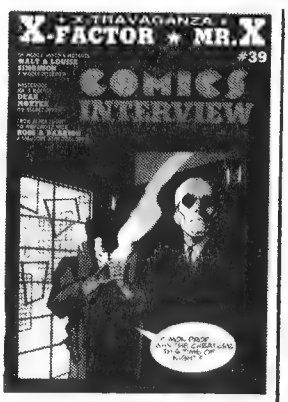

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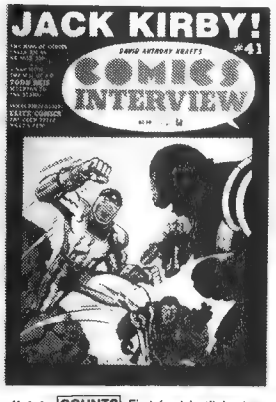

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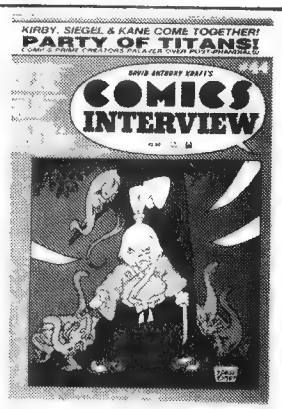

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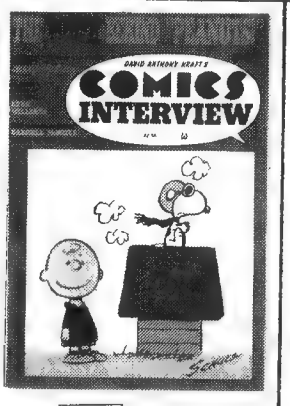

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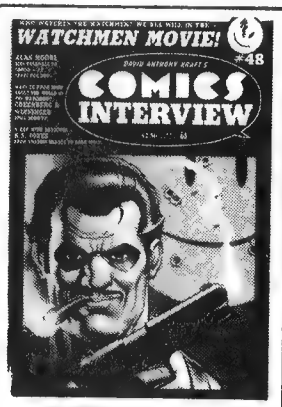

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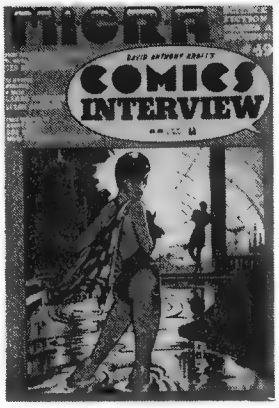

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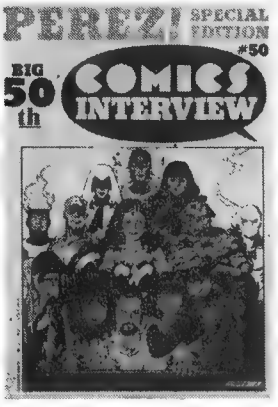

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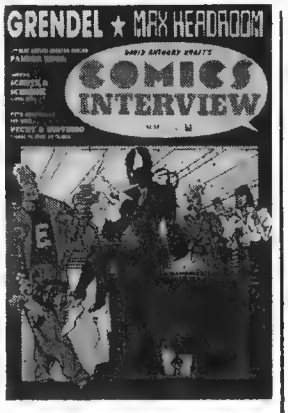

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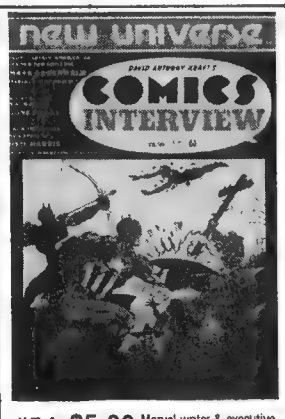

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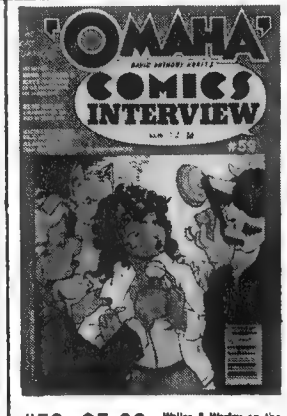

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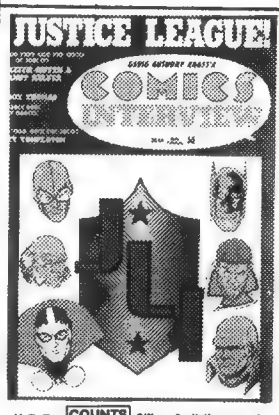

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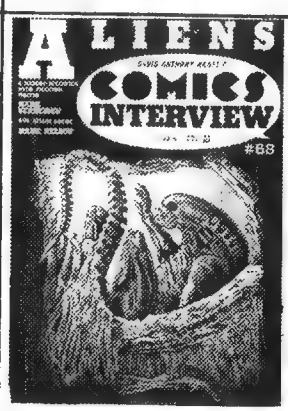

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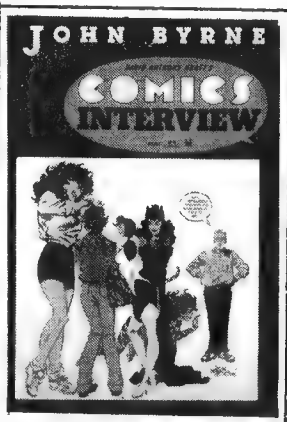

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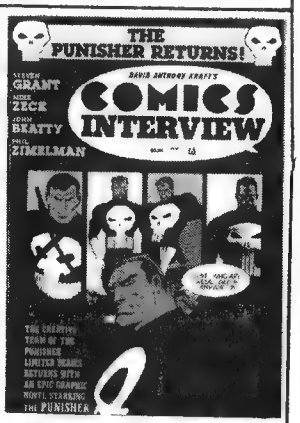

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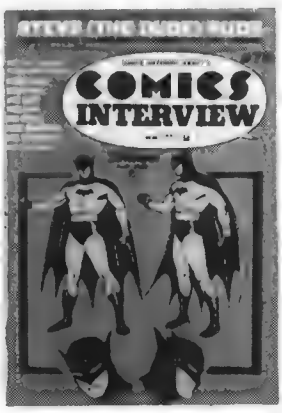

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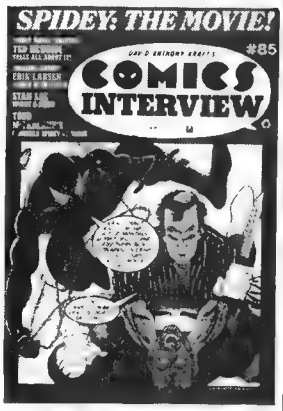

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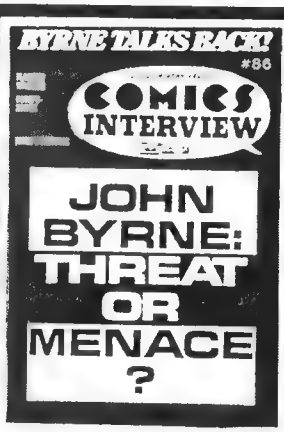

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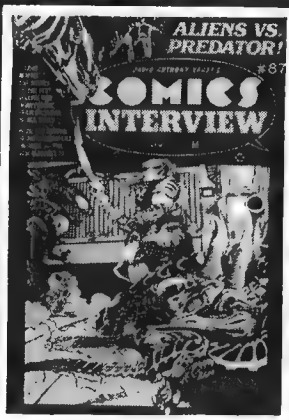

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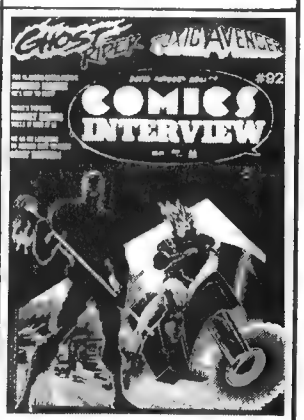

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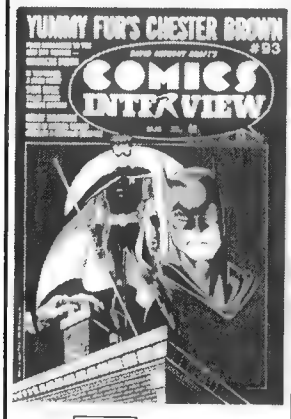

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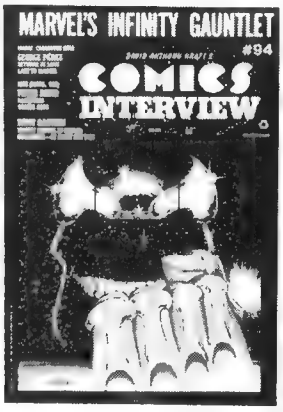

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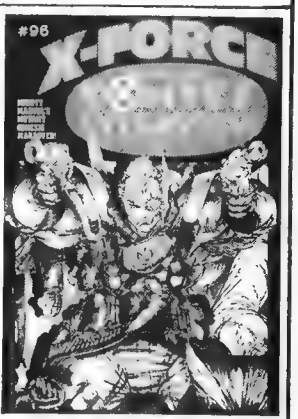

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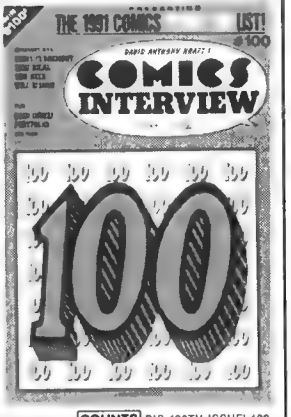

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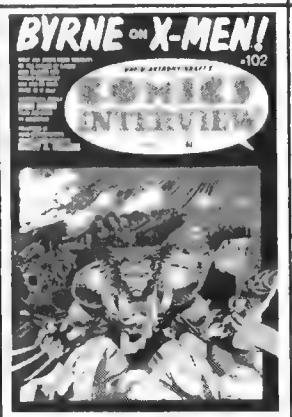

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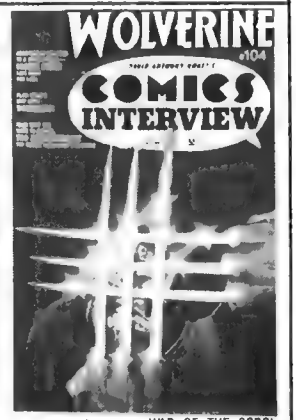

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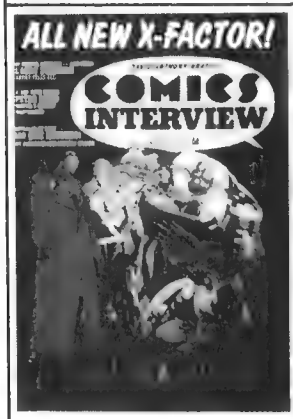

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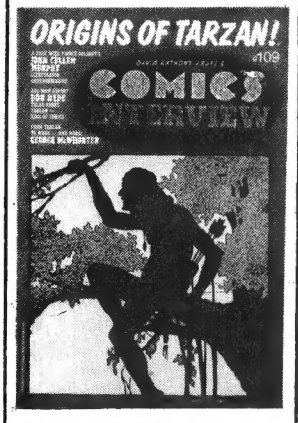

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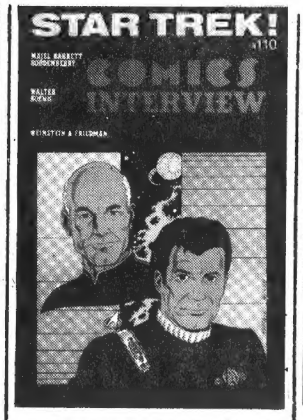

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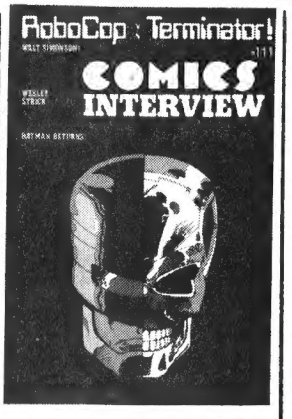

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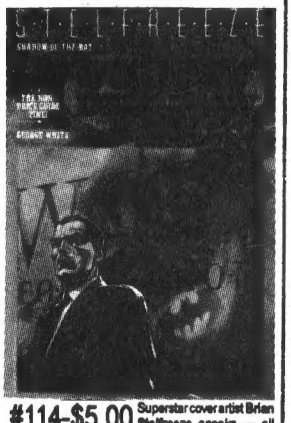

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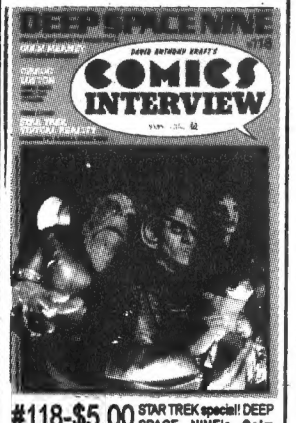

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